

**From:** [Nick Abel](#)  
**To:** [State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee](#)  
**Subject:** Submission in support of the Mineral Resources (Galilee Basin) Amendment Bill 2018.  
**Date:** Friday, 1 February 2019 10:33:40 AM

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I apologise for omitting my address and daytime phone number in my previous submission.

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

Past and continuing fossil fuel emissions have brought Earth's natural carbon sinks close to the limits of their capacity to regulate our planet's climate. Crossing that tipping point would turn carbon sinks into sources, and send Earth's temperature far above the 1.5 degrees C rise the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned we must not exceed. Once past the tipping point, future generations would face a climate more extreme than any our species has ever experienced.

How much more coal can be burned before we cross this irreversible tipping point? We don't know exactly, but the Galilee Basin contains enough coal to generate one seventh of the World's total carbon emissions, and we cannot allow any of that to be exported and burned given that we are already near the brink. How can we use the irrational and morally obscene justification that because the coal won't be burned here, it's not our problem?

Coal mining does create jobs, it's true, and new jobs are needed in north Queensland. Let's remember though, that new mines will be largely robotic, and those people who are employed are likely to be skilled and sourced from existing mining regions like the Hunter. More new jobs are likely to be generated by investment in tourism, agriculture and renewable energy industries than by an equivalent investment in coal mining. The Great Barrier Reef already supports almost 69,000 jobs, but even these existing jobs will be threatened as climate change degrades the Reef. Meanwhile the new coal mines would also be damaging ground water and harming prospects for new jobs in agriculture.

For how long would coal mining continue to provide jobs? USA and China, the world's two largest economies are already turning away from coal and investing in renewables. Houston, Texas, once oil capital of the world, is a major producer of renewable energy. It's true that demand for coal in India is strong, but there too renewables are gaining ground fast. The coal miner Adani is already hedging its bets by investing in renewables. Financial institutions are not investing in coal mines, knowing that mines dug now will be stranded assets before their capital cost is amortized.

My credentials for presenting these arguments to you are twenty years with CSIRO during which I worked on adaptation to climate change in the Murray Darling Basin and south east Queensland. I was also an author of CSIRO's report to the Northern Australia Land and Water Task Force. Now retired, I continue my research as an Honorary Associate Professor at ANU.

I have presented powerful reasons for supporting the Bill's intentions to cancel existing coal mining leases in the Galilee Basin, and prohibit the granting of new leases there. My arguments apply to all new thermal coal and gas projects in Queensland, so I advocate strongly for an amendment to the Bill which extends it to prevent any new thermal coal or gas projects. Queensland has a strong moral obligation to do so, but passing the Bill also happens to be in Queensland's own long term economic, social and environmental interests.

Thank you for your considering my submission.

Dr Nicholas Abel

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