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Committee

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From

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Mineral Resources (Galilee Basin) Amendment Bill 2018

I am writing in support of the Mineral Resources (Galilee Basin) Amendment Bill 2018. Australia is custodian of the largest living structure on earth, the Great Barrier Reef. Not only is it an iconic and unique biodiversity marvel but it is a very valuable natural resource contributing considerably to the Queensland Economy. Climate change driven by the manmade increases in atmospheric greenhouse gases, is already resulting in the death of large swathes of the Reef resulting from sea level temperature rise. Much of this dead coral is not being replaced by new growth.

The mining of low grade thermal coal from the Galilee Basin to burn in inefficient electricity power stations in developing countries will greatly increase the amount of carbon dioxide entering the atmosphere. The very large amount of very poor quality thermal coal planned to be extracted from the Galilee Basin and then burnt in very inefficient coal fired electricity power stations in developing countries (the quality is far too poor to be burned in Australian power stations) will greatly increase the world's carbon budget for atmospheric GHG emissions beyond the amount required if the world is to contain global warming to less than 1.5° or even 2°C. If these emission targets are not met then the world will take millennia to return to an equable climate as we know it that will be tolerable for humans (and other living creatures) to exist in.

Already the GHG temperature forcing has resulted in the hottest years since many million years ago. The current record breaking, heat waves in Australia are testament to the kind of conditions that are going to occur much more frequently with increased global warming and we are only at a 1°C rise since the industrial age began. For the sake of our living conditions and of generations to come we must keep the warming to the agreed amount in the Paris Accord or less which as the ACCC announcements stress, means that burning fossil fuels has to stop and quickly. To not do so will have a catastrophic outcome.

Australia cannot hide behind the pretence that it is another countries problem if the Galilee Basin coal is burnt elsewhere than Australia. The world's atmosphere and global temperature do not relate to national boundaries. We must recognise that we all live in "one world".

The Great Artesian Basin is another unique feature of the Australian landscape enabling ecosystem survival and agriculture. The proposed Galilee Basin mines will radically affect the integrity of the Basin. Stream flow changes, aquifer recharge and loss of precious aquifer water from flow into the vast mine pits to be produced with the planned mining, are outcomes that will never be rectified, and Australia as the driest continent cannot afford to squander such unique resources for the sake of a very short term, economic gain by shipping coal overseas.

A very recent CSIRO, Bureau of Meteorology, Geoscience Australia, Federal Department of Environment report on the impact of Galilee Basin coal mines on the Central Queensland water flows and water reserves indicates that it will be much larger than previously assessed. There is a very high likelihood (95% chance) that the mines will change water flows in the Belyando River basin. More than 1000km of streams will very likely have additional zero flow days. The habitat of 12 threatened species and two ecological communities are also likely to be affected. Five economic assets would be affected by the draw down from the mines with 3 associated with the Clematis Group of aquifers and one with the Jericho town water supply. Local graziers are rightly very disturbed by this prediction (Queensland Country Life 17 Dec 2018; 30 Jan 2019).

Much of the equity in the companies planning to mine the Galilee Basin is foreign ie not Australian, meaning that what should be a substantial financial reward to Queenslanders, who after all ultimately own the resource through the Government, along with the coal, goes overseas. The Queensland Government royalties to be garnered from exploiting this resource are pitifully small as a percentage (and total dollars to the treasury) of the coal value especially with transfer pricing. In other words Australians get very little indeed from this resource exploitation, very small number of jobs (see Professor John Quiggan's analysis of this) but a legacy of global warming.

There is no need (or economic sense) to use coal fired power stations to generate electricity as even in countries such as India the levelised cost of production even from existing power stations is more than the cost from renewable wind, solar and hydro power taking into account the capital cost of the renewable plants. So that the argument that mining this coal is helping eliminate poverty through cheap power production just does not wash. If the proposed Adani mine is built it will be the largest thermal coal mine in the Southern Hemisphere. Does Queensland want the stigma of being associated with this contribution to global warming?? for precious little economic gain and an environmental disaster. Remember that even with the new Queensland Treasury managed mine rehab deposit scheme, these proposed, huge, relic mine holes (many thousands of hectares) in the earth's crust are not going to be filled in by humans. They will only change over geological time frames.

Hence I agree with the Bill's intent to contribute to Australia's commitments to pursue efforts to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels by 2100 by preventing any coal mining in the Galilee Basin and support the Bill's proposed amendments to the *Mineral Resources Act 1989* to:

- prohibit the granting of new coal mining leases for land in the Galilee Basin;
- terminate existing coal mining leases for land in the Galilee Basin;
- amend existing coal mining leases which overlap with land in the Galilee Basin to exclude that land;
- confirm that no compensation is payable to the mining lease holders affected by the Bill; and

- require the mines minister to table a report in the Legislative Assembly summarising the actions taken under the provisions of the Bill.

Burning coal seam gas is equally damaging to the environment and the Bill should be extended to prevent all new thermal coal and gas projects especially in the Surat Basin. Again renewable energy sources world wide are more economic now than fossil fuels including GAS, so what's the gain for Queensland? Again most of the equity in CSG mining companies is foreign, and the Queensland Government Royalty is pitifully small.

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