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Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
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20 December 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

**Galilee Basin (Coal Prohibition) Bill 2018**

On behalf of the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS), thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Private Bill by Senator Larissa Waters, the Galilee Basin (Coal Prohibition) Bill 2018.

AMCS strongly supports the purpose of the Bill to prohibit thermal coal mining operations in the Galilee Basin. AMCS is a proud foundation member of the Stop Adani Alliance. Our opposition to Adani's thermal coal mine, and other thermal coal mining proposals in the Galilee Basin, is based on our profound concern about the impacts of climate change on Australia's oceans.

Climate change is with us now. It has been observed most conspicuously on the Great Barrier Reef. During the summers of 2016 and 2017, half of the Great Barrier Reef's shallow water corals died due to two consecutive marine heatwaves. Major bleaching and mortality also affected almost a quarter of deep water corals (40 metres).<sup>1</sup>

Hard coral cover has shown a steep decline throughout the northern, central and southern Great Barrier Reef.<sup>2</sup> The loss of coral in all three regions (northern, central, southern) is unprecedented in the historical record. Many reefs now have very low coral cover. The geographic scale of recent bleaching means that breeding populations of corals have been decimated over large areas. Last year coral recruitment declined by an alarming 35-93%, depending on the species.

In October this year, the IPCC released its Special Report into 1.5°C. This was a profound wake up call for the world. It is clear we are facing a climate emergency. The report found that human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels. It found that the risks of climate-induced impacts are projected to be much higher at 2.0°C than those at global warming of 1.5°C (high confidence).

The world's coral reefs are at the forefront of climate change impacts. Coral reefs are projected to decline by a further 70–90% at 1.5°C (high confidence) with larger losses (>99%) at 2.0°C (very high confidence). This is profoundly important for the health of the world's oceans as one quarter of all

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.uq.edu.au/news/article/2018/09/coral-bleaching-great-barrier-reef-runs-deep>

<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Marine Science, Long Term Reef Monitoring Program, [Annual Summary 2017/18](#)

marine species use coral reefs for part of their life cycle. Losing coral reefs would have a devastating knock on effect on the ecological health and integrity of the world's ocean. Half a billion people depend on coral reefs for their food security and livelihoods. Many are in Australia's region. The security consequences for Australia would be enormous.

It is imperative that we keep global warming to 1.5°C to limit the damage. This is still economically and technically feasible. It just requires political will. But time is running out fast.

Keeping to 1.5°C requires the complete elimination of thermal coal by 2050 globally. It requires the elimination of thermal coal in OECD countries by 2030. The Australian government needs to treat the situation as a national emergency. We need a plan to fully exit from thermal coal power plants by 2030 and we need a just transition strategy to exit coal exports in the same time frame.

Australia is the world's fourth largest producer of coal and the world's largest exporter of coal. Australia exports about 80% of the coal we produce. Without tackling exports, we cannot hope to protect the world's coral reefs, and the world's largest and most loved: our Great Barrier Reef.

The concept of opening up new thermal mega coal mines in this context is ludicrous, some argue suicidal. The Galilee Basin is estimated to contain 29 billion tonnes of thermal coal. Opening the Galilee to coal mining is consigning the world's reefs to oblivion – a profound injustice to future generations. Adani's Carmichael mine alone is approved at the level of 60 million tonnes per annum (Mtpa), although the company has since downscaled to 27.5Mtpa. However, if it manages to come to an agreement with Aurizon and build a rail spur line, and receive the go ahead for its outstanding approvals, other mining operations are likely to move ahead.

These include Macmines Austasia (China Stone), Waratah Coal (Alpha North and Galilee Coal Project), GVK (Kevin's Corner) and GVK & Hancock Prospecting. In total, nine thermal coal mines are proposed in the Galilee Basin which have a capacity of 282.5Mtpa of coal, equivalent to 600Mtpa of CO<sub>2</sub>. Such a development would put us on a pathway towards an uninhabitable planet.

Sir David Attenborough warned at COP24 in Poland: "If we don't take action, the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon." We only have 11 years left to exit coal in Australia to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

Deloitte Economics estimated the Great Barrier Reef was worth \$56 billion, although ecosystem service values were not incorporated in the valuation, so it is a conservative estimate. The Reef supports 64,000 jobs and generates \$6 billion to the Australian economy every year. It makes no economic sense to put these sustainable jobs at risk for 1,500 short term jobs that would be generated by Adani's Carmichael mine.

For the sake of our Reef - one of the seven natural wonders of the world, one of the most loved and recognised World Heritage sites in the world, a magnet for international tourists to Australia - and for the sake of the health of Australia's and the world's oceans, thermal coal mining in the Galilee Basin should not go ahead. Indeed, Australia must rule out opening any new or expanded thermal coal mines. AMCS fully supports the Galilee Basin (Coal Prohibition) Bill 2018.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this submission.

Yours sincerely

Imogen Zethoven AO