

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
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Galilee Basin (Coal Prohibition) Bill 2018

Dear Committee Secretary

As a long-term environmental and climate change campaigner based in north Queensland, I write in support of the above-named proposed Bill that was referred to your Committee for inquiry on 6 December 2018.

I concur with the details of the Second Reading speech given by Senator Waters in relation to this Bill on 5 December 2018.

Fossil Fuels and Climate Change

It is now an acknowledged fact that changes in human lifestyle over the last century (most notably the use of the internal combustion engine) have accelerated the rate of climate change. Science, if not logic, makes this obvious. To those who contend that climate change (of varying speeds) has always occurred, I pose two questions: How many internal combustion engines were in operation the last time this happened? How much fossil fuel was being burned back then?

We have reached a position at which we face ‘runaway’ (unstoppable) climate change within a period as short as 12 years unless rapid significant change is made to our lifestyles.

The majority of Australians understand the situation we face, and are variously incredulous, furious and distraught that those few in power are turning their backs on science, logic and the future and assuming that a ‘business as usual’ position will ‘make everything bad go away’.

The cost of climate change

It is patently obvious to the vast majority of Australians that we cannot continue ‘as usual’ if we are to deliver to future generations anything like a comfortably liveable world in which to live.

As the Department of Environment and Energy’s website notes, ‘[D]ecisions made today will have lasting consequences for future generations’.

Like many of you, I have lived in the golden years. Having enjoyed those years, we cannot be so mean-spirited and selfish as to leave disaster and misery for those coming after us.

If the intergenerational equity argument does not suffice to have this Bill accepted, the cost of continuing to prime climate change via new coal mines may.

Much has been made of various climate-change induced weather events – floods, droughts, wildfires, heatwaves. We are seeing these in Australia on a weekly basis. No area of the nation is immune.

Deloitte Access Economics has noted that average annual cost of natural disasters is already over \$18 billion annually and this will more than double by 2050.¹ How does this compare with returns to the budget that would be derived from new coalmines in the Galilee Basin?

¹ <https://www.iag.com.au/natural-disaster-costs-reach-39-billion-year-2050>

There is no valid argument for new coalmines in the Galilee, even ignoring the non-monetary costs.

The Jobs argument

Adani and many politicians make much of promises of new jobs that would be associated with new coalmines. They make little of the likely loss of many of the 64,00 jobs associated with the Great Barrier Reef, under major threat from climate change.

In terms of jobs, we in the north are aware that the future of employment is not in coalmines. Here in Townsville, having been told by various politicians and media that Adani was the only way to deliver jobs for Townsville, we find that the number of jobs on offer (**Australia-wide**) from Adani has dropped from a claimed (but refuted) 10,000 to 1500.

At the same time, we are reading of thousands of new jobs in the water pipeline, Ross River Solar farm, Sun Metals expansion, a lithium ion battery factory, new gold mines etc.²

In other words, there are many other jobs coming on line, in industries, including renewables, with a much brighter future and with far less impact on environmental and human health.

Even if our leaders were prepared to sacrifice future sustainability for short-term jobs, the lure of jobs is no longer relevant.

The Saving the Poor argument

Again, Adani and others in the coalmining industry and supporting politicians make much of helping to lift the poor (especially in India) out of poverty by providing coal-powered electricity.

The reality is that countries such as India and China are moving quickly away from coal-powered electricity generation because of both the climate and health problems associated with it. There is little point moving from unhealthy dung-powered light to unhealthy coal-powered light.

Renewable alternatives are available and being rapidly adopted both in Australia and in India and China.

In terms of helping the poor, little mention is made of the negative impact of climate-change on our near neighbours in the Pacific and other low-lying nations, such as the Maldives. These nations are seeing their lands devoured by rising sea levels.

I commend the Bill to you.

Yours faithfully

Wendy Tubman

19 December 2018

² <https://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/52-projects-transforming-the-townsville-economy-in-2017/news-story/f3d05af64a2c6011a7d3e33c9796b11a>