



Coastwatchers

Eurobodalla's environment group

11 October 2017

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Annual General Meeting Date Rescheduled

Members were advised recently that the Association's Annual General Meeting had to be rescheduled for administrative reasons.

The AGM is now to be held at **2.00 pm on Saturday 28 October 2017**, at the Tomakin Community Centre, located on the left as you enter Tomakin off George Bass Drive. The Association has since heard that the Friends of the Botanic Gardens also had to reschedule their AGM, and unfortunately, it will now clash with the Coastwatchers AGM on the 28 October 2017.

Moruya Forest Forum Success

The Coastwatchers 'Moruya Forest Forum', was held on Wednesday 23 August 2017, and was a great success.

About 100 people attended the Forum in the St. Mary's Performing Art's Centre, an ideal venue for this type of activity.



The meeting opened with the showing of an abridged version of the film "Understory" produced by David Gallan. The film highlighted the struggles over the past 30 years to save

the local south coast forests from destruction.

The Forum heard from three expert speakers:

Mike Thompson, a Coastwatchers member who talked about local forestry issues;

Virginia Young, the former Wilderness Society Forest Campaign Co-ordinator who outlined issues occurring internationally in forestry, the need to retain forests as carbon banks and biodiversity; and

Dr Oisin Sweeny, the Chief Ecologist with the National Parks Association who addressed the NPA's "Forests for all Plan".

The facilitator of the Forum was **Dr George Browning**, who did an excellent job. The Association thanks David, Mike, Virginia, Oisin and George, for

their contributions and their professionalism in making the evening such a success.

Three resolutions were passed at the end of the Forum, calling on the NSW Government to:

1. Cease Logging Mogo State Forest

Immediately cease logging the Mogo State Forest until a professionally based pre logging review is undertaken and assessed, given the known presence of both the Vulnerable (Commonwealth) Greater Glider and the Vulnerable (NSW) Yellow Bellied Glider, which have so far been ignored.



2. Existing Claytons Review

Note it is an insult to the South Coast community, for NSW Forestry to prepare a highly inadequate and Claytons pre logging review, when the review was constrained to an 18 hour budget for a 400 ha forest, and when reviewers in that forest were limited to a few tracks because of night-time occupational health and safety concerns, while searching for nocturnal species.

3. National Parks Association "Forests for All Plan"

Support the aims and rationale of National Parks Association's "FORESTS FOR ALL PLAN", and calls on the NSW Government to commit to the implementation of the PLAN as a more equitable and sustainable use of public native forests across NSW."

Victorian Forest Investigation Underway

In February 2017, VicForests began logging an area near Warburton known as the Blue Vein coupe, just a few hundred metres from the famous 350-year-old **Ada Tall Trees Reserve**.

Local citizen scientists from the 'Wildlife of the Central Highlands' Group, had found protected habitats for the Leadbeater's Possum within the area. With the bulldozers already at work Environmental Justice Australia (previously the Victorian Environmental Defenders Office) reported the matter to the Environment Department and VicForests, on behalf of four local community groups, and demanded that logging stop.



The Victorian Government called a temporary halt to logging operations and commenced an investigation. This was despite the fact that part of the forest in the coupe had already been destroyed. Local citizen scientists – who suspected there were threatened species in the area – then worked into the early hours of the morning and found the colony of Leadbeater's Possums.

Logging was halted by VicForests, and the colony of Leadbeater's Possums saved. The Victorian Environment Department is currently investigating

this logging activity. It is illegal in Victoria to log habitat, which contains endangered species.

Coastwatchers Members will be kept informed of the outcome of this matter. One scenario is that the Victorian Environment Department could end up suing VicForests, another Government agency. The law in NSW is quite the opposite, where timber is far more important than endangered or vulnerable species, such as the Yellowed-bellied Glider or the Greater Glider found in the Mogo Forest.

Dargues Reef Mine Gets Final Approval

In April 2017, Big Island Mining received final approval from the Commonwealth Government to proceed with the development of the Dargues Reef Gold Mine at Majors Creek. Big Island Mining had previously received approval under NSW Planning legislation following the NSW Planning Assessment Commission determining the matter.



Box Cut Entrance to Dargues Reef Mine

The initial Commonwealth conditional approval was granted under the (Cth) *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* was in February 2017. After further submissions from Big Island Mining addressing the issues of a Construction Environmental Management Plan and a Water

Management Plan, final approval was granted in April 2017.

Now that this 3 year process has been completed, the Association will be making a further submission to the NSW Minister for Planning. That submission will request the need for mandatory consideration of potential downstream impacts of all mining activity, given the massive damage to the environment and communities that discharges from mine sites can and do cause.



Earlier sediment discharges into Spring Creek

The bond arrangements that currently exist for miners are totally inadequate, and that will be an issue that will also be addressed to the Minister and other peak environmental groups.

These issues need a coordinated approach at State level, by peak NSW environmental organisation such as the Nature Conservation Council, as they impact State-wide development and are not simply a local issue.

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Gold Miners Use the Same Script the World Over, but being in Ireland, Religion has its' place

(The Times (UK), Saturday June 17 2017)

The neighbouring villages of Gortin and Greencastle (in Northern Ireland) have co-existed in the ruggedly beautiful Sperrin Mountains for centuries. Now something has come between them – one of Europe's most valuable gold deposits, to be precise.



Sperrin Mountains, County Tyrone

The plan was simple. Canadian prospectors set up a company, **Dalradian Resources**, to mine gold that that was left untapped in a remote corner of Northern Ireland, when a previous company was refused an explosives permit during the Troubles in the 1980s.

Dalradian, which is about to submit a long awaited planning application, set about winning friends and influencing people among the small farms and villages nestled amid gorse-covered glens and meandering rivers.

The plan, has however pitched Gortin and Greencastle against one another. The dispute has flared up in rows over a holy rock of contested origin, sponsorship of gaelic football teams and what some claim is an ancient right of way used in the fabled flight of the earls when Irish chiefs fled Ireland in 1607.

One Greencastle resident, who asked not to be named, said that villagers had not been courted in the same way as those in Gortin. "People have called the project 'Gortin Gold' but it could not be further away from Gortin. Its 800m from the village of Greencastle," he said.



The mine will create 350 jobs once it is in operation and 300 during its construction, the company says. It has downplayed concerns about the use of cyanide to extract the gold from its ore, saying that water would be released back after it was treated and that cyanide levels would be below the regulatory limits.

Environmentalists have also raised concerns about the potential impact on the Owenkillew River, which is an important habitat for the endangered freshwater pearl mussel and is believed to have delayed the application.



Cormac McAleer

Cormac McAleer, chairman of the **Save Our Sperrins Campaign**, said that some residents were fearful of speaking out

because they did not want to be accused of blocking jobs. "People didn't want to be seen asking questions, perhaps because a neighbour was promised a job," he said.

Dalradian has set up a fund for sports clubs, schools and organisations that has raised suspicions in an area unused to largess. Sean Clarke, chairman of St Pats gaelic football club in Greencastle, said that it was "probably something like a bribe to bring people on board" before the full scale of the planned development was clear.



Opponents say that there is a rock on site where Masses were held during the repression of Catholics during the Penal Laws in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Father John Forbes was blocked from holding a Mass on the site by the company (Dalradian), which says there is no evidence that the rock holds any religious significance.

He (Father John Forbes) said that the development had divided his flock. The priest is now keen to assuage the tensions. "I don't want to make much comment. Some of my parishioners are working for these people. It's got blown out of all proportion."

Patrick Anderson, chief executive of Dalradian, said "we always seek to be open and transparent with our neighbours about our plans for the project as we have done for the past seven years and as we will continue to do."

Comment: For those members who followed the Dargues Reef Mine development, so much of the approach in Northern Ireland is identical, except of course a Holy Rock. This project is not a certainty as Dalradian still needs to overcome the minor hurdles of:

- Finalising the financial viability of the project,
- Raising finance, and
- Obtaining Planning Approval.

Charging Stations for Electric Cars in the Eurobodalla Shire?

A major structural shift is underway throughout the world, to increasingly adopt fully or partial (hybrid) electric cars. It is being driven by CO2 pollution reduction targets, health (particularly with diesel) and economic factors.

A number of years ago the traditional oil companies and car manufacturers, thwarted attempts to commercially manufacture electric cars, but following the GFC they lost control to a new group of cashed up entrepreneurs such as Tesla and other battery manufacturers like Panasonic. It ceased being car manufacturers adopting batteries, and became battery manufactures adopting cars.

In Europe, most personal users of hybrid or electric cars may have their overnight charging station in their home or garage or even at work during the day. There are also 'top up' charging points in parking areas and along urban streets.

In addition to these slow rechargers, there are the fast charging stations for rapid charging. These fast charging stations are not dribble feeders but charging stations that will recharge the

car after say in 30 minutes. Most are fairly unattractive, as they are generally connected to a bulky transformer in order to generate the required power.



Scottish Stainless Steel or Aluminium Charger

Australia will come under intense pressure to change to electric cars, given the demise of the domestic petrol and diesel car manufacturing industry. The complete reliance on imported cars, coupled to moves by other countries to prohibit petrol and diesel vehicle manufacture in the near future, will force new approaches to be developed sooner rather than later in Australia. Unfortunately, Australia has a track record to lagging behind the rest of the developed world on such matters.

Norway has banned petrol and diesel vehicles from 2025, and the Netherlands is proposing the same timeframe. In 2016 40% of all vehicles sold in Norway were already either hybrid or fully electric.

The United Kingdom and France have banned petrol and diesel vehicles from 2040, and China is considering adopting the 2040 standard. While France has adopted the 2040 timeframe, the Paris Municipality is considering banning diesel vehicles by 2020, because of the health impacts of diesel usage on the city population.

Germany, Belgium and Switzerland are considering banning petrol and diesel cars by 2030.

Planning for electric car charging stations in Australia and particularly the Eurobodalla Shire, is at a very early stage.

However, the aesthetics and design of any charging stations, are factors crucial to the streetscape of all towns and cities. Most European countries take a pride in their cities and the aesthetics of their infrastructure. Examples of slow charging stations are presented above. They are basically a pipe bollard, which are quite inoffensive.



Norwegian Stainless Steel Street Charger

ACTEW in the ACT has already introduced a number of charging stations in Canberra. They are also looking to introduce rapid charging stations in key locations surrounding the ACT. Discussions are already being undertaken with interested parties including the Eurobodalla Shire Council.

The rapid charges are bulky and unattractive when in a conspicuous position in isolation. Make your own judgement, and when in Canberra visit one in Civic Centre at the junction of London Circuit and Northbourne Ave.



Civic Centre, Canberra, fast charger

Parking areas and streets should only be used for slow chargers using bollard type structures. Rapid chargers should be placed in discreet places where their clunky retro petrol bowser design, will be less offensive.

Why are we still pursuing the Adani Carmichael mine?

4 October 4, 2017
Michael West, The Conversation

Why, is Adani's gigantic Carmichael coal project so on-the-nose for the banks and so environmentally destructive, are the Federal and Queensland governments so avid in their support of it?

Once again the absurdity of building the world's biggest new thermal coal mine was put in stark relief on Monday evening via an ABC Four Corners investigation, Digging into Adani.

Where the ABC broke new ground was in exposing the sheer breadth of corruption by this Indian energy conglomerate. And its power too. The TV crew was detained and questioned in an Indian hotel for five hours by police.

It has long been the subject of high controversy that the Australian government, via the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) that is still contemplating a A\$1 billion subsidy for Adani's rail line, a proposal to freight the coal from the Galilee Basin to Adani's port at Abbot Point on the Great Barrier Reef.

But more alarming still, and Four Corners touched on this, is that the federal government is also considering using taxpayer money to finance the mine itself, not just the railway.

No investors in sight

As private banks have walked away from the project, the only way Carmichael can get finance is with the government providing guarantees to a

private banking syndicate, effectively putting taxpayers on the hook for billions of dollars in project finance.

The prospect is met with the same incredulity in India as it is here in Australia:

FOUR CORNERS: "Watching on from Delhi, India's former Environment Minister can't believe what he is seeing."

JAIRAM RAMESH: "Ultimately, it's the sovereign decision of the Australian Government, the federal government and the state government."

FOUR CORNERS: "But public money is involved, and more than public money, natural resources are involved."

JAIRAM RAMESH: "I'm very, very surprised that the Australian government, uh, for whatever reason, uh, has uh, seen it fit, uh, to all along handhold Mr Adani."

Here we have a project that does not stack up financially, and whose profits - should it make any - are destined for tax haven entities controlled privately by Adani family interests. Yet the Queensland Government has shocked local and environmentalists by gifting Adani extremely generous water rights, and royalties concessions to boot.

Why are Australian governments still in support?

The most plausible explanation is simply politics and political donations. There is no real-time disclosure of donations and it is relatively easy to disguise them, as there is no disclosure of the financial accounts of state and federal political parties either. Payments can be routed through opaque foundations, the various state organisations, and other vehicles.

Many Adani observers believe there must be money involved, so strident is the support for so unfeasible a project. The rich track record of Adani bribing

officials in India, as detailed by Four Corners, certainly points that way. But there is little evidence of it.

In the absence of proof of any significant financial incentives however, the most compelling explanation is that neither of the major parties is prepared to be "wedged" on jobs, accused of being anti-business or anti-Queensland.

There are votes in Queensland's north at stake. Furthermore, the fingerprints of Adani's lobbyists are everywhere.

Adani lobbyist and Bill Shorten's former chief of staff Cameron Milner helped run the re-election campaign of Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk. This support, according to The Australian, has been given free of charge:

Mr Milner is volunteering with the ALP while keeping his day job as director and registered lobbyist at Next Level Strategic Services, which counts among its clients Indian miner Adani...

The former ALP state secretary held meetings in April and May with Ms Palaszczuk and her chief of staff David Barbagallo to negotiate a government royalties deal for Adani, after a cabinet factional revolt threatened the state's largest mining project.

Adani therefore enjoys support and influence on both sides of politics. "Next Level Strategic Services co-director David Moore — an LNP stalwart who was Mr Newman's chief of staff during his successful 2012 election campaign — is also expected to volunteer with the LNP campaign."

So it is that Premier Palaszczuk persists with discredited claims that Carmichael will produce 10,000 jobs when Adani itself conceded in a court case two years ago the real jobs number would be but a fraction of that.

If the economics don't stack up, why is Adani still pursuing the project?

The Adani group totes an enormous debt load, the seaborne thermal coal market is in structural decline as new solar capacity is now cheaper to build than new coal-fired power plants and the government of India is committed to phasing out coal imports in the next three years.

Why flood the market with 60 million tonnes a year in new supply and further depress the price of one of this country's key export commodities?

The answer to this question lies in the byzantine structure of the Adani companies themselves. Adani already owns the terminal at Abbot Point and it needs throughput to make it financially viable.

Both the financial structures behind the port and the proposed railway are ultimately controlled in tax havens: the Cayman Islands, the British Virgin Islands and Singapore. Even if Adani Mining and its related Indian entities upstream, Adani Enterprises and Adani Power, lose money on Carmichael, the Adani family would still benefit.

The port and rail facilities merely "clip the ticket" on the volume of coal which goes through them. The Adani family then still profits from the privately-controlled infrastructure, via tax havens, while shareholders on the Indian share market shoulder the likely losses from the project.

As the man who used to be India's most powerful energy bureaucrat, E.A.S. Sharma, told the ABC: "My assessment is that by the time the Adani coal leaves the Australian coast the cost of it will be roughly about A\$90 per tonne.

"We cannot afford that, it is so expensive."

More questions than answers remain

This renders the whole project even more bizarre. Why would the government put Australian taxpayers on the hook for a project likely to lose billions of dollars when the only clear beneficiaries are the family of Indian billionaire Gautam Adani and his Caribbean tax havens.

My view is that this project is a white elephant and will not proceed. Given the commitment by our elected leaders however, it may be that some huge holes in the earth may still be dug before it falls apart.

Commonwealth Attack on Environmental Organisations

The Coastwatchers Environment Fund is one of hundreds of environment funds which have been registered on the Commonwealth Government's REO – the Register of Environmental Organisations. This registration process provides the legal basis for attracting tax-deductible donations.

A Commonwealth Parliamentary Inquiry is considering requiring 25-50% of all tax deductible revenue to be spent on remedial environmental work.

The NSW Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) has prepared the following comments.

"DGR STATUS:

Should all Environmental Charities have to plant trees?

For decades, groups on the Register of Environmental Organisations (REO) have been eligible for tax-deductible donations – encouraging private funding for the public good.

But in 2016, half the members of a (Commonwealth) Parliamentary Inquiry proposed that in order to remain eligible, environmental groups, including EDOs, must spend at least 25% of their donations revenue of reactive 'environment remediation work' – activities like tree planting.

We (the EDO) believe proactive protection of the environment provides clear public benefits in many forms:

- raising environmental awareness;
- enforcing and strengthening environmental policy and laws;
- and new research on species, ecosystems and environmental innovation.

Imposing a minimum spend on remediation would require many well-established environmental charities to

- either radically alter the way they operate;
- inefficiently divert money to other groups at the Commonwealth Government's direction;
- or lose eligibility for tax-deductibility donations altogether.

Following the 2016 REO inquiry, a 2017 Commonwealth Treasury Consultation paper asked what stakeholders think about the 'minimum spend' proposal for environment groups. It even floated the option of increasing the minimum to 50% of donated funds.

During the consultation period, environmental Deductible Gift Recipients were for the first time required to report the percentage of their public donations expended on 'on-ground environmental remediation', 'advocacy' and other activities.

The proposal did not originate within the Commonwealth Treasury – it takes up arguments made by the mining and resources lobby, including the Queensland Resources Council and the gas-industry funded Energy Resources Information Centre.

It's vital that the views of these lobbyists are not given more weight than those of the hundreds of environment groups, community members, donors and governance experts who made submissions to the REO Inquiry, pointing out the pitfalls artificially distinguishing 'on-ground' rehabilitation from other things environmental groups do to pursue their public purpose. Their evidence led to half the Commonwealth Parliamentary Committee rejecting the minimum 25% spending proposal.

It may suit some private interests for the Commonwealth Government to constrain environmental voices, restrict community access to legal services and place new administrative burdens on the charity sector.

But it's not in the public interest, nor what the broader community expect of our charity and tax laws. That is why our current laws focus on charities' purposes, rather than attempting to define their activities.