

HD Black day for democracy

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Black day for democracy

IF THE politicians send the police against the protectors of Bentley, I believe many of the 90% who oppose gasfield development in the area will turn out to demonstrate.

TD

It is outrageous that a **group** of politicians in Sydney could be so cynical about democracy as to force an unwanted development on the region, especially one that is dangerous and most likely damaging to existing businesses such as farming and tourism.

Is this the same government which says it doesn't have enough money to deliver services adequately?

The process of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, of the earth will probably be outlawed in the near future.

Why spend so much taxpayer money to enforce mining by martial law? Metgasco has never earned a dollar and has breached a number of regulations.

Should the government be so unwise as to choose a small speculative corporation over the strong objections of its citizens, then we should mourn the demise of democracy in NSW.

If the police come to force entry for Metgasco at Bentley, I urge citizens to wear a black armband or black clothing, especially those who can't be on **site** at Bentley on that day.

Scott Sledge,

Northern Rivers Guardians

Thanks Lismore

I WOULD like to congratulate the community of Lismore for the wonderful support, community spirit and goodwill that they have shown this year to Cancer Council's Relay For Life.

The event was a huge success with over 1130 people attending and over \$135,000 raised to date!

It shows the immense generosity of the Lismore and villages communities and this is something we should all be proud of.

I would like to thank every person who attended the relay, our sponsors and supporters, those who donated money to teams, donated their time to perform at the event and donated their goods and services to help run the event. It truly was a wonderful community event.

The money raised goes to help the approximately 290 people (and their families) that are diagnosed with cancer in the Lismore region each year.

Abby Wallace,

Cancer Council NSW Northern Region

Dear Premier ...

AN OPEN letter to Premier Mike Baird:

I am writing to congratulate you on your election as premier of NSW and on your recognition that the public has lost its faith in its politicians and that this matter must be addressed.

Mr Baird, I would like to point out that whilst what you say is true, there are many of us who wonder if you fully realise why public trust has been lost.

It is not just a matter of the terribly corrupt political culture that has been exposed by ICAC.

It is, more importantly, because the public no longer feels represented or supported by the members of parliament it elected to serve them.

Nowhere is this more true than in my own electorate, Lismore, where our MP, Thomas George, has failed to recognise or represent the very real concerns of the enormous majority of this electorate who are opposed to unconventional gas exploration and mining in the Northern Rivers.

It is because of this lack of representation that thousands of us are currently participating in the Bentley Blockade against the incursion into our area of the mining **company** known as Metgasco.

Contrary to the information peddled by Metgasco and in some sectors of the media, we are not "radical extremists" or "professional protesters", although it is true that many among us have participated in previous actions against unconventional gas mining and exploration in our region.

We in fact represent an enormous cross-section of the community, and our numbers include farmers, professionals taking time off work or coming to the blockade before or after work, young families, and many middle-aged and elderly people who have never before taken such action. We have had around 3000 people at a time at our blockade, and many more will come if or when they get word that the arrival of the mining equipment, or a police presence aimed at removing this blockade, is imminent.

Our protest is one of non-violent direct action, but there are people there who are prepared to take actions that may result in their arrest if necessary.

The blockade has already lasted for three months, and we are afraid of the possibility that the police, funded by taxpayers' money, will be used to break it up by supporting the legal right of Metgasco to enter the **property** on which it wishes to mine.

However, we have no recourse left but to take this action, because our voice and our vote has been ignored by our political representatives.

(Edited for length)

Jill Garsden,

Goonellabah

Less of everything

WELL, Mars bars are smaller, so are Minties and Fantaes, and Arnott's 'Little pillow biscuits' are so small, it's not worth putting the kettle on! Mr Abbott is also giving us less pension and less time to spend it, so he's up with the trend. What a lucky country!

Bett Taylor,

Kyogle

Koala campaign

THE local campaign to convince the RMS (Roads and Maritime services) and the NSW State Government to reconsider the route for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway between Broadwater and Wardell is gaining momentum.

A Ballina Shire Council-commissioned Koala Habitat Study, which was completed last year, identified a nationally significant koala population in the Blackwall Range/Coolgardie/Meerschaum Vale area that would be put at risk if the proposed motorway route is not changed.

Council's expert koala ecologist, Dr Steve Phillips, has repeatedly stated that unless the highway route is changed, this nationally significant koala colony will be "wiped out".

While the koala is the focus of the campaign due to the findings of the recent study, there are over 30 other flora and fauna species that would be put at risk unless the highway route is changed, including the last known population of the North Coast potoroo.

Councillors unanimously supported a motion to write to the RMS and key politicians, including local MP Don Page, calling for the route to be changed due to the significant impacts it would have on the biodiversity of the important area.

Furthermore, the council is calling for the creation of a koala sanctuary so that the nationally significant colony can be protected into the future.

A highway route that more closely aligns with the existing highway, with bypasses of both Broadwater and Wardell, would not have an impact on either the important wildlife zone or the Indigenous Protection Area (IPA) which is also of national significance.

Moreover, a route that largely follows the existing highway could be delivered sooner, and more than likely cheaper (the NSW Roads Minister confirmed in parliament a few weeks ago that the estimated cost of the proposed route was over \$1 billion – and that doesn't include any additional culverts and protection measures now being considered by the RMS).

A big thank you to everyone who has signed the petition, written emails/letters and offered support to the campaign so far.

For more information about the campaign, and what you can do to help, please check out the Facebook page Save Ballina's Koalas.

It's not a question of one or the other – we can have a safe new highway and protect this important wildlife refuge for generations to come.

Cr Jeff Johnson,

Ballina Shire Councillor

Bring back the trains

HALFWAY through Bob Carr's term as Premier of NSW, the Labor government started cutting funding to trains and putting more money into roads.

Of course Bob didn't notice because he was more concerned with his abs.

Something convinced the minister of the day to stop funding rail. What was it? Were there donations to the party from oil and tyre companies or trucking companies? Were the relevant ministers offered great jobs after politics?

Before the last state election our Nationals representatives in the Northern Rivers promised to bring back our train.

Since they got into power they have broken that promise and instead produced the same over-inflated costings we had previously got from the Labor Party.

Across the state of NSW there have been many rail lines cut, and Sydney has second-rate rail services. We need an efficient public transport system in this state.

We need honest, ethical leaders who care about the needs of the people rather than their own comfort or status.

We deserve it.

Bring back the trains to NSW.

Beth Shelley,

Booerie Creek

Police state

ANOTHER open letter to Premier Mike Baird:

We in Australia believe we live in a democracy.

This does not mean that we have the right to choose among a limited range of policy platforms on one day every few years.

It means that the government is responsive to the wishes of the majority of the people.

Currently your government is turning our democracy into a police state, using the police to enforce your policies and their supportive laws which give mining companies and their shareholders precedence over the wishes of the majority of the people – especially those people who live in the areas impacted by mining leases.

Your government may believe it is short of budget funds, but we are not prepared to sacrifice our values, our landscape and environment, or put our water supplies and health at risk to meet this supposed shortfall.

Surprisingly enough, not all of us place money in front of our health and wellbeing. The people who do that are mostly those who benefit financially, but live away from the impacted areas.

We do not need gas in NSW – there is ample supply available from Bass Strait and from Queensland to cover a transition to renewable energy. Yes, I know you don't get royalties from those, but we could instead be investing in, and leading the development of renewable energy in Australia.

When 97% of climate scientists say we need to transition as rapidly as possible to renewable energy to reduce carbon pollution, what right have you, with your total lack of expertise and knowledge in this area, to ignore the information and support – with police state tactics – the development of even more fossil fuel mining?

You try to demonise the protectors who try to stop the rape of the country – all over the state – calling them “extremists”. I, for one, am a retired ex-government employee with expertise in water and agriculture.

Many of my fellow protectors are farmers, businessmen, doctors, lawyers, academics, motor mechanics.

If fighting for our democratic rights makes us extremists, then that is what we are.

Mr Premier and your Cabinet colleagues, stop the exploration and development of more coal and gas mining immediately.

Yes, we may lose some export income, but the mining industry is not a major provider of long-term employment, nor is it a developer of local economies – quite the reverse – as in the old days of the 1850s gold rush, it sees rapid “development”, and then rapid collapse and destruction of the local values that existed before.

Richard Swinton,

Clunes

Money talks

TO ALL those who oppose CSG:

I am writing to suggest there is another way to effectively eliminate this threat of profound water poisoning which would require much less effort than that which is currently being expended by the souls at the front line.

Metgasco may fold through the courageous efforts of direct action, but may just be taken over by Dart Energy, stakeholders of Dutch Shell and Petro **China**.

These players have too many fingers in too many holes in the earth to be stopped by local action, and the corporate government have shown little interest in our health or that of the environment until close to election time.

It has become painfully obvious that majority vote no longer rules and no matter how many petitions we sign, letters we write or marches we attend or who in fact governs our land, this does not change the fact that our substrata has been already **sold** many times over to mining companies since white man first set foot here.

A quick revision of our current global corporate management will show us who holds the cards and where to take action.

Multi-national bankers and related companies hold the potential earnings of the land and its people as security on the billions they manufacture and lend to the government in its endless cycle of debt.

So effectively, their support of the mining companies and governments relies on the money you and I pay them in servicing our loans, credit cards, paying our taxes and rates etc.

In fact this is the only real money that exists – the rest is speculation and inflation, so we as the people have the power to demand change with a simple protest.

There is only one language these people understand and that is money.

Ergo the only way to get their attention is to stop paying them, en masse. Are we really going to keep asking to be heard whilst we are effectively paying the mining companies indirectly to continue their operations?

It's time to get smart and get organised.

We need working parties on the legal requirements of paying off small amounts on our mortgages or credit cards in protest (my info is they cannot take your house or your possessions if you pay something); the legality of the local, State and Federal government in condoning such action against our constitution; the way to pay our rates and taxes only if they start actually representing the majority, even if we keep the money in a separate local building society.

This should not change the governments' legal requirements to support us financially with social security or Medicare as long as we continue to fulfil those agreements, but this can also be researched.

Get pre-written template paperwork sent out to make it easy and decide on a day to start en masse, and we will all tip the scales of power.

Many of us believe that this is the most powerful, non-violent action we can take for ourselves and the planet and that now is the time.

Dr Jacqueline Boustany

True democracy

HOW much more proof do Australians need that we cannot trust politicians with any vote on any legislation in the House?

Take this power away from them and give it to "The People".

Abandon our "representative democracy" and go to "True Democracy" ... it goes like this:

Democracy is characterised and defined as "government by the people". The "governing class" should be "the people", not the politicians. Our "elected representatives" should be in the class called "servants of the people" (which is part of their oath, by the way).

Over the years, politicians have taken unto themselves the mantle of "leader".

They form policies that they have decided we want, and then proceed to sell these policies to us.

They should be asking their constituents what we want and then promote and reflect the majority wish in the House. That is their one and only mandate.

However, it is now the case that voting on bills is along party lines, with a nod to lobbyist influence and personal benefit ... the citizens are ignored.

In a "representative democracy" such as ours, citizens have only one democratic right that they exercise between the hours of 8am and 6pm on a Saturday every three years or so.

After that the politicians do what they want and we are impotent unless we challenge in the constitutional court (something the vast majority of citizens cannot afford).

The Swiss have a system of Cantons that give the people a direct input into legislation. It works!

There is also a movement in Italy called Real Democracy that holds public forums, the findings of which are submitted to the government for consideration when enacting legislation. Good stuff, but we can go one better.

Abandon our representative democracy and go to "True Democracy".

Take the vote on bills away from the politicians and give it to The People.

The politicians propose and debate the bills in Parliament, the debates are reported and shown in all media.

After a set period of time, the people then, optionally, vote ... electronically. Twenty years ago the logistics for this were too difficult. Today it can be done. We have the technology!

Optional voting is proposed only for voting on bills. This would ensure that only those that are affected, interested enough, and have taken the effort to be truly informed will vote. We should retain compulsory voting for electoral representation.

"True Democracy" could be trialled in local government, then selected state areas of responsibility and finally introduced into federal government.

It would be an "evolution" without the "revolution".

Imagine, the "lobbyist" industry would disappear – no point lobbying a politician who has little power.

There would be no use for party factions, as the "party line" vote would not exist – there go the numbers.

No need for political donations or slush funds – no one could provide any kickback.

Anthony Plesko,

Ballina

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