

From the President

Hi to all EnvA members and supporters, EnvA has been running for five months now, and we have definitely hit the ground running fast!

We have been active in advocating against the opening of any new coal mines, and for holding existing mine operations accountable for their environmental damage.

Over the festive season break, Coral created an [EnvA web page](#). It is worth a look to see the variety and number of submissions we've put in as part of our advocacy work. It also has an overview of some of the ongoing campaigns that we are working on, and a stack of news from our short time in operation.

In this newsletter:

- ★ Good news with the rejection (for the first time) of a coal mine under Australia's national environment legislation! A real win and hopefully just the first of many.
- ★ An introduction to a few other positive government legislative and process changes, but EnvA will be making our voice heard to make sure that they really help.
- ★ Details on the next general meeting for all those that would like to chat more than read!

Hope to see you at the next meeting!

James York
President



Clive's CQC project rejected – a huge win!



What a fantastic outcome! The refusal of a coal mine that was going to have a direct impact on the GBRWHA! Our federal Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek listened to the science, listened to Queensland, and most importantly, listened to us and will not be approving the Central Queensland Coal (CQC) mine!

The proposed mine was only 10km from the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. The Federal Government's Independent Expert Scientific Committee and the Queensland Environment Department's both recommended that the [project be rejected](#) due to its environmental impacts.

The tourism industry, fishing industry, Styx catchment landholders and many of us in the community wrote submissions, signed petitions, attended rallies and met with government officers and ministers to make sure that the decision-makers knew that the community values the reef, wetlands, endangered species and groundwater far more than a coal mine.

This is a victory for the Reef, for communities that depend on the Reef and wetlands for their livelihoods, and for the climate!

And we celebrated. News from the celebration on the next page.

Coal and climate in CQ

Did you know?

- In Queensland, if a coal mine plans to extract less than 2 million tonnes of coal a year, it is not currently required to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIS).
- Queensland government believes that the assessment of 'small' mines can be dealt with by a thorough assessment of their Environmental Authority (EA) application. This means that when we are asked for comment on a proposed new or expanding coal mine, we don't have the detail of full impacts.
- When an EIS is not required, we only have one short opportunity to make a submission, whereas if an EIS is required, we get to comment on both the EIS and EA assessment processes.
- The cunning mining companies have found a way to exploit this loophole and split their proposal into multiple small applications to keep under this threshold and avoid having to document the real environmental impacts.
- Sometimes, these 'small' coal mines which end up being 'large' coal mines have very significant cumulative impacts on endangered species and communities, but they avoid being labelled as 'significant' by the federal and State Government by applying for the projects as though they are separate projects.

A recent example - Vitrinite's Vulcan Coal Complex

Vitrinite are progressively developing the Vulcan Coal Complex in three separate steps – all of which are under the 2 million tonnes of coal a year EIS triggers.

Vulcan Coal Mine

In 2021, the Queensland Government granted a mining lease and environmental authority (EA) to produce 1.95 million tonnes per annum of coal without having to undertake an EIS, despite the project clearing over 200ha of koala habitat.

Vulcan South Coal Mine

In 2022, mining lease and EA applications for the Vulcan South coal mine were lodged. This mine is planning to extract coal at a rate of 1.95 million tonnes per annum. This mine also was not required to produce an EIS, despite over 1000ha of koala habitat and 70ha of greater glider habitat to be cleared.

Vulcan Coal Infrastructure

In 2023, an application for an amendment to the Vulcan Coal EA was lodged to allow them to add a coal handling and preparation plant and other infrastructure. Again, no EIS required despite the acknowledgement that 93ha would be cleared which may change the magnitude of impacts on threatened species and communities.

Vitrinite presents these as three separate resource projects to government, despite Vitrinite presenting them as a single Vulcan Complex project on their website.

Vitrinite and many other coal companies are using the loophole!

Celebrating the CQC win

EnvA and Capricorn Conservation Council co-hosted the celebration of the rejection of Central Queensland Coal at a gathering at Merv Anderson Park earlier this month.

It was the site where the first CQ rally against the mine was held in April 2021.



About 30 people turned out to celebrate and send a "thank you" message to Tanya Plibersek for listening and making a scientifically sound decision.



Capricorn Conservation Council started the campaign 10 years ago when it was known as the Styx Coal proposal (thanks Michael McCabe!) and continued the campaign until EnvA took on the task.

We all know that mining and burning coal is fueling climate change. Australia is already 1.47°C above pre-industrial temperatures. Our Reef is struggling to survive; and heatwaves, bushfires and storms are becoming more frequent and severe.

No government that is serious about minimising the catastrophic consequences of climate change can defend and approve new fossil fuel projects.

"It is fantastic that a coal mine so close to the Reef was rejected."

"Now I hope that government will stop subsidising fossil projects and stop new ones starting up."

"Our Reef and precious wildlife depend on reducing the impacts of climate change."

Sophie George, Capricorn Conservation Council

An independent EPA

Queensland is the only state in Australia without an independent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

EPAs act as watchdogs to enforce laws that protect our environment from inappropriate development and use. Without one, there's no one to hold those that exploit the rules accountable.

The Qld Government has been investigating the possibility for an independent Environment Protection Agency for about a year, but no decision has yet been announced.

Now is our opportunity to join a State-wide call for an EPA that can protect our environment now!



Here's how you can help this campaign:

1. Take a photo with a statement of why you want an EPA (like the ones shown here)
2. Share on your social media site using the #QldEPA and tag Annastacia Palaszczuk MP, Meaghan Scanlon MP and your local MP
3. Encourage others to do the same!



The Safeguard Mechanism

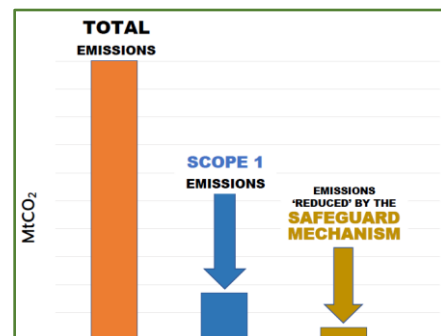
- Will the reforms reduce emissions?

What is the safeguard mechanism?

One of federal Labor's key policies to reduce emissions is the Safeguard Mechanism. It is not a new concept. It was first introduced in 2016 by a previous Coalition government.

In basic terms, the Safeguard Mechanism currently sets a limit (called a baseline) on the amount of Scope 1 emissions that a polluting industry can release each year.

The current problem with the Safeguard Mechanism is that the baselines are set extremely high and hence emissions have continued to rise since it was introduced. The current federal government is working on reforming the Safeguard Mechanism with the aim of reducing emissions gradually over the next 6-7 years.



What are the proposed reforms?



The reforms include changing the way that baselines are calculated so that they do require some effort to reduce their emissions in the first year.

Then every year, this will be reduced by 4.9% so that the big polluters must continue to take steps to decarbonise.

Will the reforms help?

While it sounds good to gradually reduce the emissions that big polluters can release, climate scientists are convinced that there are too many loopholes and if the Safety Mechanism is endorsed in its current form, it will not lead to emission reductions.

The current proposal simply makes it easier and cheaper for polluters to buy offsets, instead of investing in the technology and processes needed to cut emissions. Offsets will not reduce emissions and will only maintain the status quo of emission levels. If new fossil fuel developments are allowed to proceed, emission levels are likely to increase.

EnvA's submission has four recommendations to improve the Safeguard Mechanism:

1. Don't let polluters purchasing carbon credits unless they first invest in genuine emissions cuts at their facilities. Polluters should not be allowed to just buy their way out of making genuine emission cuts.
2. Require polluters to use Safeguard Mechanism Credits before being allowed to use Australian Carbon Credit Units. Offsets must be a last resort.
3. Prohibit new or expanding coal and gas facilities and their associated additional emissions. This would defeat the purpose of trying to reduce emissions through the Safeguard Mechanism.
4. Do not use Powering the Regions Funds to finance fossil fuel producers. This represents yet more tax-payer subsidies for an incredibly lucrative and polluting industry at the expense of industries that actually have a viable future in a clean economy.

EnvA member's meeting

Please join us for a EnvA members chat session!

When: Wednesday 8 March, 6.00-7.00pm

Where: Online

What: A chance for EnvA members to catch up, hear what is happening, and chat about the next steps in making a difference in CQ.

RSVP to enva.cq@outlook.com for details on how to join the meeting.



Get involved

Here is how you can help EnvA and the environment:

- ★ **Become a member:** It is free and numbers count! You'll also be included in all our member newsletters and get invitation to all our general meetings and events. Click [here](#) for our online membership application.
- ★ **Volunteer:** Whatever your skills, we would love to have you onboard! Many hands make light work! Join and put your hand up to help [here](#).
- ★ **Like and follow us on social media:** You can find our page [here](#). It will keep you up to date on what's happening at EnvA and local news related to climate change and government decisions.
- ★ **Donate:** Any donations will really help keep EnvA alive and active! Options for donating are on our website [here](#).
- ★ **Come along to our meetings and events:** As a member, you will be provided direct invitations. We also advertise these on our [social media page](#) and [web site](#).

Make a difference

Join the committee!

We have a vacancy on the EnvA management committee – so here's your chance to get more involved!

- ★ It is a great way to learn how community groups operate, and get experience in all facets of small business management.
- ★ It is not a huge amount of work. All we ask is that you attend most monthly meetings which usually go for an hour and sometimes an hour and a half, read the occasional short document and help out at the events we hold during the year. If you'd like to do more – it would be fantastic – there is always lots to do!
- ★ Our meetings are mostly fun and a great place to chat about campaign strategies to convince decision-makers to put environmental and social values up there with economic values.
- ★ We do hope to fill the position at the next meeting, so if your keen, please give Coral a call or send an email.

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