

From the President

Hi to all EnvA members and supporters!

It has been a little while since our last EnvA News and hence we have lots of news to share with you.

Our 'big' campaigns include:

- saving koalas from coal mines,
- stopping major gas facilities starting up in the Bowen Basin,
- fixing the flawed Queensland assessment processes, and
- stopping the approval of new coal mines in this region.

There has been good progress on all these campaigns – some of which are summarised in this newsletter. But if you even want to read more, there is more detail the [campaign page](#) on our website.

I also use this opportunity to welcome two new faces to the management committee since the last news.

Maggie Jane has joined us on the committee and is already being very active in helping progress campaign work and taking on some of the background research.

Matilda Widdowson has also joined the committee AND has taken on the Assistant Coordinator position to help Coral with the huge amounts of work that EnvA is involved in.

Happy reading and hope to see you at EnvA's next meeting or event!

James York
President



Saving koalas from coal in CQ



Did you know that koalas in Central Queensland are now on the endangered species list?

Why? Habitat clearing and fragmentation is a major contributor to the loss of koalas. Climate change impacts (including prolonged and more extreme heatwaves, droughts and more extreme bushfires) also play a significant role in the demise of our iconic Aussie critter.

Nearly all the new and expanding coal and gas proposals in Central Queensland involve the clearing and fragmentation of koala habitat. These projects have a direct impact on koala habitat, and at the same time, the mining and burning of these fossil fuels significantly contribute to rising temperatures and the severe weather events that further impact on our koala populations.

Helping all of our endangered species and communities survive for future generations to enjoy and all the economic benefits from tourism is a huge task. There are many working groups and organisations working on this – whether it be speaking out about local loss and fragmentation of habitat, actively creating or restoring habitat, research, or caring for sick and injured koalas.

EnvA's current campaign is in having a voice when new or expanding coal mines are proposed, active involvement in the national koala recovery team and in overseeing a research project about the impacts of fossil fuel developments in Central Queensland.

You can read more about the koala recovery plan in this newsletter and/or follow EnvA's campaign on our website [here](#).

Coal and climate in CQ

Not great news...

The Australian government is sending very mixed messages about their commitment to addressing climate change and preventing extinctions of our species and ecosystems.

On the same day as the opposition's budget reply speech, Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek, approved a new coal mine AND she also decided that three of the projects that she was reconsidering in light of significant new information about the impacts of climate on our wildlife, ecosystems and special areas could proceed to assessment.

All this as we are 'fast-tracking' a transition away from fossil fuels?

"To tackle climate change, Australia must rapidly phase out the use of coal and gas power and get on board with the world's transition to a clean, renewable energy future. This means leaving coal in the ground and doing more to give us a fighting chance against further climate impacts."

The International Energy Agency

The Isaac River coal mine gets conditional approval ☹️

This is the first coal mine to be approved under Australia's environmental legislation since the Labor Government was elected in May last year. This was a very disappointing decision and is completely out of step with the global scientific consensus that the mining and burning of fossil fuels is driving dangerous climate change.

Bowen Coking Coal does still need to identify a suitable offset to make up for the impact the mine will have on the endangered ornamental snake.

EnvA is of the firm view that no offsets can ever make up for the loss of critical habitat and should only be used as a last resort for essential development, not new coal and gas proposals.

Three of the Living Wonders projects allowed to proceed 😞

As a refresher on the Living Wonders legal intervention, the Environment Council of Central Queensland (EcoCeQ), with the help of Environmental Justice Australia, submitted requests for the reconsideration of 18 coal and gas proposals on the basis that the climate risks to our living wonders is contrary to their protection and management required by law.

So far, two of the proposals were withdrawn by the proponents and two were cancelled by the environment minister due to not providing the requested information, despite having years to do so.



Disappointingly, at the same time as the Minister approved her first coal mine, she dismissed the requirement to assess the climate impacts of three of the remaining Living Wonders projects.

We call on the Environment Minister to put all new fossil fuel projects on pause until the Federal Government can properly assess them under a stronger, reformed Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act that the government committed to reform last year.

Gas is becoming a threat to CQ's environment

We all know that the Bowen Basin has been a key player in the coal resources industry with over 80 mines developed in the Region. But did you know that there is currently only one gas project in the Basin?

Arrow Energy has been operating the Moranbah Gas Project since 2004 with the gas supporting the Townsville's Power station and industrial market.



In 2021 the Queensland and Australian governments each committed \$5 million to a Bowen basin gas pipeline study to investigate the potential to connect gas reserves in the Bowen Basin to the east coast market and overseas customers. This sparked the interest of gas proponents in progressing their gas projects.

Blue Energy has been the first to progress the development of three of their petroleum leases in the Bowen Basin.



EnvA's issues

Some of our many concerns with this project:

- If the gas pipeline goes ahead, it will be the first of many new gas proposals,
- We don't need more gas if we are to meet emission targets and climate impacts,
- The project was approved without a proper assessment of the environmental impacts including impacts on threatened species and communities, and
- The Queensland government has entrusted Blue Energy to do its own compliance with few conditions attached to the approval.

More info on this is on our webpage [here](#).

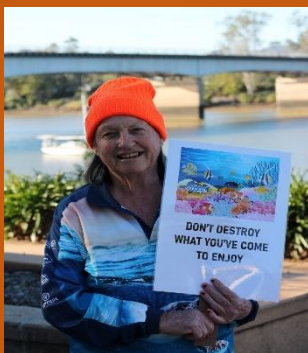
Vale Colleen

A true environmental advocate

With the recent passing of long-time environmental advocate Colleen Fagan, many have come to reflect upon Colleen's commitment to our local environment. She shared her love of diving and underwater photography and was actively involved in trying to protect our Reef and marine environment.



Colleen was well known and respected in environmental circles for her enduring contributions to the environment. She was always one of the first to volunteer for local events, whether that be rubbish clean up or weeding, sponsored educational or community awareness events or even rallies.



Many people gathered for her recent memorial with recollections of awkward interactions, reminiscing on her overwhelming willingness to help and be involved in anything environmental associated with the Capricorn Coast.

Colleen was also unashamedly forward about broaching topics that may cause unease amongst some and that's why we all liked her.

She said what we were thinking, without hesitation, without apprehension, without consideration to possible adverse reactions that may ensue.

Colleen will be missed.

The Recovery Plan for the koala

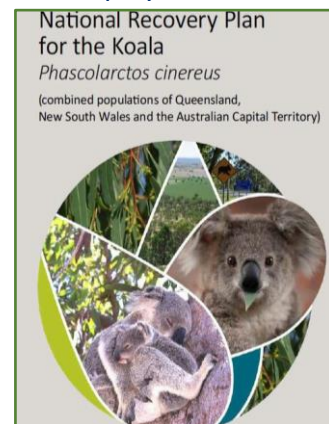
In February 2022, the koala was added to the endangered list in Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

Habitat clearing and climate change impacts are the two big reasons that there has been an over 50% reduction in population numbers in the last 20 years. Disease, dog attacks and vehicle strikes have also played a role.

Just two months later, the Australian government published the Recovery Plan to achieve three key goals:

- To stop the decline and preferably increase koala habitat and population numbers.
- To improve connectivity between koala populations to help with gene flow.
- To increase the role of communities in koala monitoring, conservation and management.

Click on the image to read the Koala Recovery Plan.



The recovery plan actions



In basic terms, the Recovery Plan contains 38 actions under 12 different themes. EnvA won't be working across all the themes nor all the actions – there will be other groups with much greater skills and experience.

Our focus will be on the actions which directly relate to EnvA's priorities to save koalas from new fossil fuel developments.

The main actions that EnvA will be involved in are within the 'Policy and Planning' and 'Climate' themes.

Our priority will be to advocate for changes to the assessment processes to ensure that projects which involve the loss of koala habitat:

- are required to undergo a thorough environmental assessment process which addresses the cumulative impacts of habitat clearing and fragmentation,
- are required to undertake an assessment of the climate impacts of the additional emissions on all koala populations and not just the local impacts of habitat clearing, and
- if the project is going to be approved, that there are meaningful offsets that increases koala habitat and the management of that habitat.

Our research project is underway!

Lock the Gate Alliance has kindly assisted with funding a research project to assess the impacts that coal mining has had on koala habitat within the Bowen Basin. It will also look at the future impacts if the proposed coal mines are given approval to proceed.

The koala team at Central Queensland University has just started on this research project which will provide us with a clear picture on the impact of coal mining on our regional koala populations and will provide us with recommendations on how the results of the findings of the research may be used to provide input into the review of Federal Environmental Legislation later this year.



Our committee

These are the amazing group of people that lead EnvA's direction and actions:

- ★ James York – President
- ★ Coral Rowston – Secretary
- ★ Tom Sjolund – Treasurer
- ★ Matilda Widdowson – member
- ★ Maryanne Smith – member
- ★ Maggie Jane – member



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

Welcome Tilly!

In very exciting news, EnvA has a new assistant coordinator ...

Matilda Widdowson (Tilly) has always had a passion for our environment – especially protecting our wildlife. She was also one of the first members of EnvA!

Tilly has grown up in the region, and is very passionate about creating a sustainable CQ for the generations to come. Hence, she was really excited about the opportunity to become an even bigger part of EnvA and turn her passion for the environment into meaningful and long-lasting impacts for the Central Queensland community and for our wildlife habitats.



“Let's save our endangered wildlife from the habitat clearing and climate change impacts of new coal and gas projects. We have enough approved fossil fuels to see us through to a clean energy future”, said Matilda.

