

What Bob Brown did next

The Australian Greens federal leader Senator Bob Brown resigned his seat in the Senate at the end of June, but he's not going silent on the issues of our time. As he told a standing-room only audience at Leichhardt Town Hall on June 14: "I am ultimately a campaigning environmentalist". And his next campaign is saving the Kimberley – a fight he likened to the legendary one to save the Franklin River in Tasmania in the 1980s. In his own words this is what he said on June 14:

I've just come back from over in the Kimberley in Western Australia. This is where Woodside, one of the greatest fossil fuel extractors, is wanting to put a massive gas factory, a 'gas hub' they call it, just north of Broome, at a place called James Price Point.

Now that's a stunning place. If you ever get to Broome, go to James Price Point. It's got an Anglo name on it, but it's steeped in indigenous living culture. And I've been out with the men of the indigenous people there, to be shown, for example, places where for centuries they've sat in circles carving their stone tools. You can see the circle and you can see the shards of the stone tools and the story of where they've come from and where they're going to.

A little further on is the birthing place and that's women's

business, and I didn't go there. It's not my place to go. But again, it is an intact, working part of the history and the culture of those folk. They call this 'song lines'. And the story of their ancestral beings mixes in with another phenomenal thing on the shoreline there, which is dinosaur footprints!

Now according to our scientists, the dinosaurs were there 130 million years ago. The biggest of these dinosaur footprints, single footprints, is more than 1.4 metres across. Now this giant herbivore plonked its way across James Price Point and you can see the tracks effectively. At 31 metres long these are the largest creatures to ever move on land, on this planet, and you can see where they trod. Amongst those ancient footprints are other smaller ones, where various other carnivorous and non-carnivorous dinosaurs roamed. And the indigenous people have seen these for thousands of years and they're part of their story, their history of the ancestors who made that land and named that land.

When the scientists finally turned up there – some Girl Scouts had spotted these prints in 1935 – they asked the Aboriginal people and they knew everything about them, they showed them the lot. These go for 200 kilometres long along that coast. This may be the only place on the planet, where living indigenous history is interwoven with the story of the dinosaurs.

And Woodside wants to build a \$30 million gas factory across that shore, across the other indigenous sites and across the rare monsoon thickets, which have, in turn, rare bats, bilbies,



The next Franklin: James Price Point in the Kimberley is part of one of the world's last great wilderness areas.

Photo courtesy Nigel Gaunt

which were thought not to be there, but have been discovered to be there now. We saw eagles and hawks gliding up and down the coast.

While we were there last week, the first hump back whale calved just off the shore. They're arriving now, for the calving season. This is the nursery; it's the incubator for the whales, the great whales from the Antarctic. And they want to put across this a shipping lane and a port, with piers going out, which is going to deal with hundreds of mega-ships each year. The premier of

Western Australia also wants uranium and coal extraction to go out to export through this port in the future.

Now I can tell you that something there has changed dramatically since I was there 18 months ago. That's the people of Broome – they don't want it. The fence-sitters have moved off the fence – and no doubt more will do that.

As for WA Premier Colin Barnett, he reminds me of the 'whispering bulldozer' Premier of Tasmania, Robin Gray, in the 1980s who was determined to build the Franklin Dam. His

view was that the Franklin was nothing but a brown, leech-ridden ditch. Premier Barnett says similarly disparaging things about James Price Point. He would do well to ring up Premier Gray, who after an election in

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Bob Brown

Coming soon: the threat next door

by Hall Greenland

Your rights as a residents to object to obnoxious over-development are now at risk. The NSW Minister for Planning, Brad Hazzard, announced last week

that the government would be confining the public's right to have a say to "strategic planning". From then on, he said, it would be "full steam ahead" for developers.

Apparently the rights of residents and Councils to challenge and

reject particular developments – and if necessary fight them in the courts – are to be stripped away.

Mr Hazzard told a breakfast meeting of the developer-friendly Housing Industry Association in Sydney on Tuesday, June 26, that he would soon release the proposed changes. He admitted that the inquiry undertaken by Tim

Moore and Ron Dyer – both appointed by him – into reform of the planning process had not come up with the right answers.

He said the government's proposals would be "daring and will make a difference". As the Sydney Morning Herald report noted, "developers welcomed Mr Hazzard's plan" although they noted there would be

difficulties implementing it.

The point about "strategic plans" is that they are entirely in the hands of unelected bureaucrats. Sure, they allow formal public comment on the jargon-ridden documents that they draw up.

This latest announcement from the minister represents

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1982 sent the bulldozers into the Franklin Valley and was in full flight. He had with him then, the opposition and the Upper House. And it all looked very bleak. But something happened down there. People

saw that river, they responded to it and the mainland – these are national assets – came and said we're not going to do that. Then there was a change of government in Canberra and a High Court decision, and the Franklin is running free today.

Those of us who know about this great gas hub intended for this magnificent site in Western

Australia need to rise to affect the same outcome.

Besides there are alternatives for the site of that gas hub.

I'll tell you a curious thing about Woodside: over in Timor Leste, East Timor, Woodside's got a big gas field off the coast there. Now because it's a poor country the government of Timor Leste was trying to get the company

to bring the processing ashore and Woodside was saying: No, we will process it at sea. Here they are off the Kimberley coast insisting they bring it ashore and saying: No, we won't process it at sea.

Now if you ask me, I would say the whales, including the blue whales passing through this territory, would prefer they leave

the gas alone. Leave it to the next generation when it might be more safely dealt with. But isn't it curious, how at James Price Point they're doing the exact opposite to what they're doing in Timor Leste?

If you can see somehow, some way, help the people at James Price Point, then please do so.
www.bobbrown.org.au

Cate Faehrmann: The Greens lead Senate candidate

Greens NSW members have elected Cate Faehrmann to be their lead Senate candidate for the 2013 Federal Election.

Cate is currently a Greens MP in the NSW Upper House. Her

experience prior to this includes:

- CEO, Nature Conservation Council of NSW
- Board director, Getup!
- Board director, Environmental Defenders' Office
- Founder, Walk against Warming.

Cate is well aware of the challenges ahead to prevent the Coalition seizing control of both the lower and upper houses of Federal Parliament.

"The Green's achievements since 2010 on dental health, local jobs creation and investment in clean energy, and combined with the party's strong advocacy on issues that ordinary Australians are concerned about will be the

foundation stones for the 2013 election campaign," Cate says.

"Our ability to build on the party's many successes through a passionate, grassroots campaign in the lead up to the next federal election will be the difference between the Greens maintaining our position in the balance of power and Tony Abbott getting a blank cheque in both houses."

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Cate Faehrmann

'The Great Train Line Rip-off'

Think that headline is an exaggeration? Then just look at the figures. The new South West Rail link in Sydney – 11km long – is set to cost \$2.1 billion. Compare that to the new Mandurah line in Perth: 71km long and costing – wait for it – \$1.5bn (including rolling stock).

In other words, in Sydney the cost is \$191 million per kilometre of new rail track compared to \$18 million in Perth.

Mandurah is not an isolated case. "Examples like this abound," says EcoTransit's Gavin Gatenby. "Brisbane's 10km Richlands

to Springfield rail extension is costing \$475 million, which includes a kilometre-long bridge over a freeway and two stations, one of them elevated, plus a 7km integrated cycleway. A significant capacity increase to a nearby freeway is also loaded into that price."

Asked by a parliamentary committee last November to explain why the rail line in Sydney was costing seven times (at least) the price of Perth's, Transport NSW Deputy Director General, Christopher Lock, cited three reasons: the recession in the construction industry in Perth at the time Mandurah was begun; the fact that it was a lighter gauge; and that it ran down the middle of an already constructed freeway. These are certainly all

factors that would have led might lead to a lower price. But what Mr Lock didn't mention was that Mandurah involved 11 stations, tunnelling under the CBD and two river bridges – compared to the two stations and flat terrain for the South West link.

Another example, cited by EcoTransit, is the Light Rail line in the inner-Sydney. The per kilometre cost of the first stage, completed in 2004, was \$9 million (adjusted for inflation). The second stage linking Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill is slated to cost \$31m per kilometre.

What are the causes for this blow-out in costs? Gatenby thinks part of the explanation lies with NSW Treasury. It's staffed with people hostile to public transport. So when Treasury estimates the costs of new lines, they inflate the estimates in the hope of deterring governments from

building them. However, if the politicians do decide to build, these inflated estimates become the starting point for the giant consortiums who bid to construct the new lines.

Elizabeth Farrelly, writing in The Sydney Morning Herald,

believes another reason lies in the dismantling of the NSW Public Works Department which in another century actually built our rail system. In WA there is still a PWD which may explain why Mandurah cost about one-seventh of the SW link in Sydney.



More information, watch <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0kiYfx0fRI>, <http://www.youtube.com/user/EcoTransitSydney?feature=mhee>

Coming soon: the threat next door

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a fundamental attack on the central core of the one great reform of the Wran Labor government of the 1970s. Paul Landa, the then planning minister, introduced the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act, whose aims

enshrined the public's right to a say in what was built in this state, whether it was next door or in the CBD. It also gave Councils the right to reject particular developments and the right to fight them in the courts on behalf of residents if necessary.

In making this reform, Landa was recognising the long fight, which began in the 1960s, of residents and communities

to have a say in their living environment. Those were the days when insurgent councils like Leichhardt's and North Sydney's defied state governments and party machines, when mayors like Nick Origlass and Ted Mack became household names, when scores of resident action groups were formed, and when Jack Munday and the Builders Labourers' Federation saved

much of our city with their Green Bans.

Now the Coalition government proposes to turn back the clock to the bad old days of the notorious Askin government. Whether they will succeed is another question entirely. Local elections are to be held on September 8 and they represent a chance for communities to

rebuff the state government and its local supporters. Meanwhile, the Greens' spokesman for planning, David Shoebridge MLC, has announced that the Greens will be attempting to defeat these changes when they become before the Upper House of the NSW parliament.

Follow development at nswgreens.org.au

What The Greens say

Sydney needs a replacement airport, not a second airport. A second airport will make things far worse for the people under Sydney Airport's flightpaths because it will allow aircraft smaller than jets to be removed. The 26% of air traffic capacity that is currently taken by those small planes would then be available for large jets – which are noisier, more polluting and more dangerous.



NSW Greens Senator Lee Rhiannon discusses airport issues with Greens deputy leader Adam Bandt and Jamie Parker, state MP for Balmain

Plane truths about Sydney Airport

As the noise gets worse over Sydney's inner-west, Labor and Liberal politicians trot out the tired old promises about a second airport...

by Paul Fitzgerald

The myths of Badgerys Creek served inner-Sydney Labor and Liberal politicians well for many years. The myths were: (1) that it would alleviate aircraft noise for residents affected by Sydney Airport, and (2) that it would be built. The first is a myth because Badgerys Creek was only ever planned to be a secondary airport which would free up capacity at Sydney Airport for more large jets.

The myths allowed the politicians to go to one election after another telling their angry aircraft-noise-affected constituents, 'We have a plan. Badgerys Creek will come to the rescue.'

Inner-Sydney MPs Anthony Albanese (Labor) and Joe Hockey (Liberal) now want to repeat those myths with Wilton. For Albanese

it is particularly important to be able to say, 'I have a plan. Wilton will come to the rescue.' As federal Transport Minister, he approved Sydney Airport's Master Plan which will allow the air traffic to grow by 60% (from 265,700 aircraft movements a year to 427,400 by 2029). It's also important to him because his Labor Party is responsible for the current situation.

When the Hawke-Keating government approved and built the third runway at Sydney Airport, it locked residents under the flightpaths into ever-increasing noise, air pollution and crash risk. The purpose of the third (parallel) runway was to increase the capacity of the airport with a second north-south runway. (You can accommodate far more planes using parallel runways than crossing runways.) Albanese has no defence other than the distraction of a 'second airport at Wilton'.

Let's have a look at what a 'second airport at Wilton' really means. As the recent report of the Joint Study on Aviation Capacity in the

Sydney Region says, it would be a 'supplementary airport'. Its role would be to allow Sydney Airport to operate at peak efficiency, and eventually at maximum capacity. This would create more problems for residents affected by Sydney Airport, not less.

About 26% of the air traffic at Sydney Airport consists of regional and 'general aviation' flights by propeller aircraft and a few very small jets. These are the flights that would be sent to a second airport if it were built, freeing up capacity at Sydney Airport for more large jets, which are noisier, more polluting and more dangerous.

So, what can be done? The first thing to understand is that Sydney Airport, with its noise, air pollution and crash risk, is an environmental problem, and the longer you leave an environmental problem, the harder it is to solve. This problem has been left so long – and exacerbated by successive federal governments – that only a difficult solution remains. That solution is to close Sydney

Airport and build a replacement in a location where its impact will be minimal. The future sale of the current airport land would help pay for the new airport.

The replacement airport needs to be outside the Sydney Basin airshed (within which Sydney's air pollution circulates) and connected to Sydney by high speed rail. Imagine departure and arrival lounges at, say, Central or Parramatta stations. You check in there and travel by train for forty or fifty minutes to the airport. Other cities have shifted inner city airports away from densely populated areas – Hong Kong, Athens, Oslo, Bangkok. Sydney could do it too.

Easy to imagine – not so easy to do. But it is possible, as other cities have shown. And relocating Sydney Airport is now the only long-term solution.

In the meantime, high speed rail linking Australia's east coast cities would slow down the growth of Sydney's air traffic. The Sydney-Melbourne corridor accounts for more than 20% of air passenger movements at Sydney Airport. (It is the

second busiest air passenger route in the world.) A train ride of just over three hours from the centre of Sydney to the centre of Melbourne would be very appealing to the majority of those travellers.

Wilton won't fly

Wilton is not acceptable as the site for a replacement airport; nor as the site for a second airport if it were ever built. The Wilton site was assessed in 1985 to an extent sufficient to rule it out. It is in Sydney's drinking water catchment and near dams supplying the Illawarra's drinking water. It is inside the airshed of the Sydney Basin which means that fumes and particulates from aircraft and related road traffic would contribute to greater Sydney's air pollution woes. Since the environmental impact statement was prepared in 1985, residential areas that would be under flightpaths have dramatically increased.

The Sydney Mining Herald?

A cloud continues to hang over Fairfax Media (the publishers of The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age, The Australian Financial Review, Newcastle Herald, Illawarra Mercury and Canberra Times) after mining magnate Gina Rinehart bought a 19% share of the company. Rinehart

has demanded three positions on the eight-member Fairfax board and the deputy chairman's post for herself.

There is widespread alarm at this move because Rinehart, well-known for her right-wing views, believes that she should be able to interfere in the editorial direction of the Fairfax newspapers – particularly on the issues of climate change and

mining. She has refused to sign the charter of editorial independence that the current Fairfax board is committed to.

"I don't want to wake up in the morning to find that my newspaper choice is between Rupert Murdoch and Gina Rinehart," said Greens deputy leader Adam Bandt MP. "Editorial independence is critical so that journalists can file a story without having to worry that the newspaper owner is going

to ring them up to say 'don't file that story or change it'."

Both Labor and Liberal spokesmen have voiced "concern" about a Rinehart takeover but rejected a proposal by WA Greens Senator, Scott Ludlam, that parliament pass legislation guaranteeing the editorial independence of newspapers by requiring proprietors to sign a charter of editorial independence.

Meanwhile the current board and management at Fairfax are pursuing plans to cut hundreds of journalists from their papers on the grounds that falling circulations, the switch to the internet and dwindling advertising revenues make the old quality journalism impossible to fund.

This crisis in the financing of serious journalism has led to voices as diverse as Crikey publisher Eric Beecher and journalism

academic Wendy Bacon advocating arms-length government subsidies for investigative journalism.



Education under Barry O'Farrell: A 'class' act

The Coalition government's education 'reforms' will undermine a fair and useful education for all

by John Kaye, Greens NSW MP

When he was the opposition spokesperson, the now-Education Minister Adrian Piccoli spent his time running around NSW telling anyone who would listen that he was not Terry Metherell. He was of course referring to the late-1980s Greiner government minister who after two years in the job precipitated an unprecedented parent and teacher revolt.

It turns out that Mr Piccoli was telling the truth. He is not Terry Metherell but actually

Surprisingly, many of the really frightening changes were invented and trialled by Adrian Piccoli's Labor predecessors and have the blessing of the Gillard government. It appears that there is a bipartisan consensus on writing the doom for public education.

At first glance, the O'Farrell government's "Local Schools, Local Decisions" devolution model sounds quite plausible. Mr Piccoli argues that handing over 70 percent of the school's budget to the principal will allow decisions on staffing and spending priorities that will address the needs of the local community. Unfortunately the reality is that local decisions rapidly translate to local blame for inadequate school funding. A similar scheme in Victoria has

Crucial school positions such as librarians and music educators will be sacrificed to ensure there are enough maths and science teachers. These are choices no principal should have to make. They have educational consequences no students should have to suffer.

Schools serving disadvantaged communities and remote areas of the state will struggle to attract teachers, further widening the gap between wealth and poverty.

The public education system is also reeling from news that at least 200 so-called "back-office" jobs will be shed in the Department of Education and Communities. However, it is not just the jobs that are going to be slashed. Support for equity programs, drug and alcohol prevention and any mention of environmental and sustainability are also being abolished. For almost four decades schools that serve communities with the highest densities of disadvantaged families in NSW have had the advice and assistance of the Department that designed and implemented programs that cut the rough edges off poverty. The O'Farrell government's budget squeeze will now force them to go it alone with appalling consequences for students and teachers.

While the Minister contends that these programs are better developed at the school level, the harsh reality of the demands on the time of teachers and principals means that they will in

effect disappear with appalling long-term consequences.

The O'Farrell government is also rolling out a new funding model for public school children with disabilities and learning difficulties. Designed to cut the growth in the \$1.2bn special needs budget, 272 schools will see reductions in the amount of money they have to help students with autism and mental health issues. Specialist teachers will be replaced by a 'jack-of-all-trades' educator with just 110 hours of online training. Classes for

provides. This year another \$62 million was slashed from TAFE's budget.

The Greens' analysis of data from the federal government's training research agency shows that the NSW government had almost halved its expenditure on training since 1997, after accounting for the increase in the number of hours delivered and inflation.

The future of public provision of training in NSW is at even greater risk after state and federal governments agreed in April

"A similar scheme in Victoria has that state spending 12 percent less per student than in NSW."

children with delayed language development are disappearing.

Under-investing in education, particularly for students with special needs or from disadvantaged backgrounds is cruel. It is also short sighted and dangerous.

So much for the clever country

In yet another example of the Coalition's short-term thinking, TAFE teachers were not protected from front line job cuts in the O'Farrell government's slash-and-burn budget that will see another 10,000 public sector workers sacked. The Coalition is prepared to sacrifice TAFE on the AAA credit rating altar, despite the long term economic and social benefits that it

to introduced a voucher-based entitlement funding for training, HECS-like income contingent loans for diplomas and more competition with private training companies.

Public education is the keystone of a successful and safe society, yet it is being lined up by the Coalition to be remade in the image of the failed American model. Unfair competition, budget cuts and mean and tricky schemes to reduce expenditure on the most vulnerable will inevitably undermine social cohesion and increase criminal justice costs. The Greens are working with parents, teachers and their union to stop the spread of this insidious vision of a privatised and underfunded education system.

"Crucial school positions such as librarians and music educators will be sacrificed to ensure there are enough maths and science teachers. These are choices no principal should have to make."

much worse. His plans for public schools, his sustained attack on TAFE and his undermining of special needs funding have plunged the O'Farrell government into a mounting conflict with parents, teachers and the Greens.

The Coalition have harnessed their ideological commitment to shrinking the government and their passion for budget cutting and surpluses to develop an all-out assault on public education.

that state spending 12 percent less per student than in NSW.

The Greens are deeply concerned that principals will be confronted with impossible choices. Faced with an unworkable budget, retiring permanent teachers will be replaced with much cheaper casuals, robbing students of the continuity that only a single subject teacher for a year can provide.

A can-do program to clean-up Australia

by Cate Faermann, NSW Greens MLC

A deposit and refund system to help reduce pollution from beverage containers is a simple concept and one that makes sense from almost every point of view. It really is a 'no brainer'. South Australia has had a container deposit scheme for well over 30 years and now has the highest rates of recycling of bottles and cans in Australia and the

lowest rates of littering. Containers comprise just 4 per cent of litter in South Australia compared to around 30 per cent in the rest of Australia.

Deposit schemes are designed to be self-funding, with no cost to the consumer who redeems their deposit. But charities and schools can really benefit. The Scouts in South Australia make a multimillion dollar profit by participating in the scheme in that state.

Despite the clear benefits, the multinational beverage industry has waged a 30-year campaign against any move to place a

nominal deposit on beverage containers. Beverage industry giants like Coca-Cola Amatil have been using the Keep Australia Beautiful Council and other lobby groups as a means to campaign against deposit schemes.

But the claims of the beverage industry don't stack up, and container deposit schemes have been successful in 11 states of the United States, in all provinces but one in Canada, in Sweden, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark.

The Greens have announced our intention to introduce a bill to the Upper House for a NSW

container deposit scheme. Clover Moore will do the same in the Lower House.

A national refund scheme of 10 cents per container would lead to an additional 4 billion (yes 4 billion!) containers being recycled. That's about 440,000 tonnes of extra material recycled each year. Compare that to the weight of the steel arch of the Sydney Harbour Bridge at around 35,500 tonnes.

Clearly there are still a huge number of containers not being recycled. Can we afford to keep doing this? Obviously not. It's time we took action on this

kind of pollution which has a big impact on our waterways, oceans, wildlife, parks and local communities.



You can support the campaign here: <http://catefaermann.org/cashforcontainers>

Open season for hunters after O'Farrell's deal

by Mark Riboldi

In order to get support for contentious legislation to privatise the state's electricity generators, NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell has struck a deal with the fringe right-wing Shooters Party in NSW Parliament which will see amateur recreational hunters able to shoot in over 40 per cent of the area covered by NSW national parks, nature reserves, regional parks and state conservation areas.

The program will be overseen by the Game Council NSW, which

was established in 2002 in a similar unprincipled deal between the Shooters Party and the then-Labor government, which at the same time opened around 2 million hectares of state forests to amateur recreational hunters. Both Shooters Party MPs in NSW Parliament are former chairmen of the Game Council.

The state forest experience shows us that recreational hunting to control feral animals does not work. Despite more than a decade of increased shooter access to public land, there is not a single instance of amateur recreational hunting effectively controlling a feral animal population in NSW.

According to WIRES – the NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service – “the claims made that recreational hunting

provides an effective or low cost option to control feral animal populations are not supported by any evidence.”

The invasive Species Council (ISC) – an organisation campaigning for better laws and policies to protect the Australian environment from feral species – also finds the conservation claims of the Game Council and amateur hunters highly spurious. The ISC points out that the number of feral animals killed amounts to less than two feral animals (half of them rabbits) on average per licensed amateur hunter.

According to the ISC, “the trivial numbers of feral animals killed by recreational hunters, probably not even 1 per cent of the populations targeted, (is) far less than is needed to either reduce feral animal populations or their environmental impacts.”

There are also safety concerns. The NSW Public Service Association has stated that their members have expressed “serious concerns about the danger to themselves and the community when shooting is allowed in bushland popular with walkers and picnickers.”

Experience in other jurisdictions highlights the potential for tragic results when public land is opened up to amateur shooters. In 2010 on New Zealand's North Island, a 25-year-old New Zealand school teacher, Rosemary Ives, was mistaken for a deer by an amateur hunter and shot dead while brushing her teeth at a camp site. Late last year, 23-year-old Dougal Fyfe was shot dead by an amateur hunter on public land on the South Island.

This isn't the first time that the Shooters Party

have pushed for hunting in national parks. In 2009 Greens NSW MP (now Senator) Lee Rhiannon was at the forefront of a broad coalition of environment, animal welfare and workers organisations which successfully blocked similar plans to extend recreational hunting on public land to national parks.

“My office was inundated with over 1000 messages during the campaign from people living in cities and in the bush who were concerned for their safety, wildlife protection and animal welfare. The campaign was fought and won because the strength and breadth of community opposition

made it untenable for the Labor government to side with the Shooters in parliament,” Senator Rhiannon said.

This time around, The Greens NSW are again part of a broad coalition campaigning against hunting in national parks, including the Total Environment Centre, the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, The Wilderness Society, Bushwalkers NSW, WIRES, the National Parks Association, Humane Society International, the NSW Public Service Association, the Protected Area Workers Association and Wildwalks.



To get involved visit: <http://nohunting.wildwalks.com/>

Barry's power sell-off deal: Dirty deeds done dirt cheap



by John Kaye, Greens NSW MP

By cutting a disgraceful deal with the Shooters and Fishers party, the O'Farrell Coalition government has finally accomplished what Labor tried to achieve for four years but failed – parliamentary approval for the sale of the state's electricity generators.

Stay tuned for a fire sale of state assets as Treasurer Mike Baird uses the power the 'Guns and Moses' alliance of Shooters,

'Christian' 'Democrats', Liberals and Nationals have given him to privatise the profits and socialise the losses. Under the Electricity Generator Assets (Authorised Transactions) Act 2012 the Treasurer can sell the money-making activities of the state's electricity industry while leaving the costs and liabilities in public hands.

For generations to come, households and taxpayers will end up paying many times over for the O'Farrell government's fistful of dollars. Not only will income from the profits of the generators be lost but the public purse could be left with the risks

“This grubby deal is not just a bad for the environment. It is also a terrible outcome for the state's economy.”

of rising coal prices, generator outages and repair costs.

So far only two counter-parts of the deal have emerged: passage of chief hunter MP Robert Brown's legislation opening national parks and other wilderness areas to recreational shooters and a stacked committee inquiring into more administrative funding for 'minor' (read: smaller than the Greens) parties. These two pieces of silver seem to have been enough to get the right wing MPs over the line on the sell-off legislation despite vehement opposition from some of the Shooters' core constituencies.

The environment, households and jobs are set to suffer at the hands of the new private owners who will want to make more profits by burning more coal to sell more electricity. Along the way, the state's greenhouse

gas emissions will continue to increase and the future of wind, solar and energy efficiency has been dealt a heavy blow. The deal compounds the environmental damage of the sell-off by opening up many of the state's national parks, nature reserves and state conservation to recreational hunting. Enthusiastic amateurs will make the feral animal problem worse and undermine the safety and enjoyment of passive users.

This grubby deal is not just a bad for the environment. It is also a terrible outcome for the

state's economy. Just two weeks before the NSW Upper House was due to debate the legislation, it was revealed that Macquarie Generation's \$1.1 billion write-down could foreshadow a total reduction of \$1.4 billion in the sale value. The government will now be faced with the challenge of providing a secure, low-cost coal supply to sweeten the deal and attract bidders. Labor's Cobbora coal mine project near Dubbo is set to be developed at the public expense to subsidise the sell-off. This could be a long-term cost of \$2 billion borne by the people of NSW, while being responsible for up to 52.8 million tonnes of CO₂ each year.

The Greens will monitor the deal as it emerges to expose the hidden subsidies and the ongoing environmental costs. We have already begun the process of scrutinising the Cobbora mine arrangements and will work to make sure that any of the costs that remain in public hands are uncovered before the ink is dry on the sale contracts.

Western Sydney calls for a fair go for solar

One community's crusade to support families trying to save on electricity bills – and save the planet.

By David Lenton, Nepean Greens

See nsw.greens.org.au

The online 'Campaign for a 1 For 1 Solar Feed In Tariff' petition can be found here: www.communityrun.org/petitions/campaign-for-a-1-for-1-solar-feed-in-tariff

O'Farrell cuts compo



by David Shoebridge,
NSW Greens MLC

Barry O'Farrell's Workers Compensation Amendment Bill was rushed through the NSW Parliament in less than 72 hours. The final vote on it was taken at 2:40am Friday morning, 22 June. The Greens and Labor opposed it. O'Farrell's changes savaged workers compensation rights for millions of people in NSW.

Here are the main details:

Cuts to weekly compo payments

The Bill for the first time will see incapacitated workers being cut off weekly benefits, with most workers having a maximum

entitlement to 2.5 years of payments. Many will be forced onto Centrelink benefits and into poverty.

Journey claims lost

Workers lost their compo coverage for injuries suffered when going to work and coming home. Fred Nile moved an amendment to the current law that abolishes all journey claims unless there is 'a real and substantial connection' between the work and the accident. This means 99% of journey claims will be lost.

Cuts to medical support

For 99% of injured workers all entitlements to medical expenses will be cut off after 12 months from the date of claim – or if a worker receives weekly payments, 12 months after they are cut off from weekly payments. This will result, for example, in injured workers who need prosthetic limbs or hearing aids being unable to replace them when necessary. Even very seriously injured workers (those with a wpi "whole person impairment" over 20%) who remain unable to work will lose the right to all medical expenses once they turn 68 unless their injury is so extreme that they qualify for a wpi of greater than 30%.

To understand the impact of these "wpi" thresholds, having an accident resulting in half your foot being amputated provides only a wpi of 18%, and an accident requiring the amputation your entire lower leg leaving only a stump below the knee more than 3 inches long, gives a wpi of 28%. These injuries are not defined as "serious injuries" in this obscene legislation.

Killed at work

No one who loses a loved at work will now be able to claim for nervous shock, no matter how severely their lives have been damaged.

Cuts to lump sum payments

Before these amendments injured workers could receive up to \$50,000 in support for pain and suffering if they have an injury that is assessed at 10% wpi (whole person impairment) or more. Now no worker will receive compensation for the pain and suffering they endure, even from the most serious injury.

Entitlements to lump sum compensation for impairment (as opposed to pain and suffering) have been abolished for all injuries unless the wpi assessment is greater than 10%. This will prevent lump sum claims being made for injuries such as industrial deafness, most back

injury claims and even for such significant injuries as an entire shoulder reconstruction.

Making the cuts retrospective

The changes are even more drastic when you realise that they almost entirely retrospective, applying to almost all prior injuries, even where workers have long settled their cases. People have made choices affecting the rest of their lives based on the way the system worked. It is completely unprincipled for Barry O'Farrell to throw these people's lives into turmoil by retrospective legislation.

Workers lose out on legal costs

To add insult to injury the Bill removes injured workers' ability to have their legal costs paid – even where they win their legal case. They now have to pay all their costs from their own pocket. Most injured workers cannot afford the legal fees to challenge a well-heeled insurance company so they will simply not run their cases.

No cuts to insurance gouging

Among all the changes made, nothing has been done to contain the sky-rocketing fees paid to private insurers to manage claims, one of the real reasons that the scheme is in the red. Astoundingly the bureaucratic nightmare that is WorkCover gained expanded powers to further mismanage the scheme with these law changes.

This legislation is not the end of the matter. Over the coming days, months and years the savagery and unfairness of these changes will become apparent to the broader community. The Greens will join with unions and injured workers to press for a return to fairness and dignity in the NSW workers compensation scheme.

Firies win reprieve

The Greens fought in Parliament to protect the workers compensation rights of every worker, whether a nurse, construction worker, cleaner or police officer. At 2:00am in the morning, when almost every other amendment moved by the Greens to protect other workers was defeated by the Coalition and the Shooters and Fred Nile, we secured some last-minute amendments to protect at least fire fighters and paramedics from these savage cuts. The government's draft Bill had proposed protecting only police and coal miners from the changes. The Greens' amendments extended those protections to all emergency service workers. This was only possible because the fire fighters stood up to the O'Farrell government, downed tools and protested outside parliament on the day of the legislation in an extraordinary demonstration of defiance and unity.

Meet Jeff Johnson, Greens Councillor on Ballina Council

Jeff Johnson is the first and only Greens councillor on NSW's Ballina Council and a founding member of the Ballina Greens. As well as roads, rates, and recycling, his council is grappling with the impact of climate change, sea level rise, as well as the increasing threat of Coal Seam Gas mining in the Northern Rivers.

How do you see your role?

I believe the primary role of government is to ensure the safety of its citizens, and to protect the environment for future generations. I want to see more forward-thinking legislation and planning that takes climate change into consideration, as well as a greater focus on social equity and environmental protection. Without a safe and healthy environment our quality of life can only diminish.

How do you work together with the other councillors?

Everyone except me is officially an independent on the Ballina Council and I really am in the minority. Things can be hard as the 'long termers' – councillors who have been there fifteen to twenty years – tend to stick together and control the decision-making process.

What made you run for council?

I'm passionate about progressing environmental and social change. I wanted to be a part of the debate so I put my hand up not knowing what to expect. I'd heard lots of negative stories about Ballina Council as it's not known as a progressive council, but I wanted to put forward the issues that I thought were important and to hopefully influence the debate. When I announced that I was standing for the Greens it was a bit of a shock for most people and there was a big media fuss when Lee Rhiannon came up to Lennox Head (where I live and a suburb within the Ballina Shire) to

launch the campaign. The newspaper headline was 'party politics comes to Ballina!'

What are the big issues in Ballina?

The number one local government issue is Coastal Planning and getting ready for climate change. All the Councillors have seen flood modelling that shows the whole town under water when the NSW Government's 90cm sea level rise prediction is incorporated into the modelling. The other key issue is the threat of coal seam gas mining. Metgasco had previously revealed plans for 500 CSG wells throughout the Northern Rivers, but it was revealed at the recent NSW Government enquiry that the number may top 5000. Metgasco also want to build a gas pipeline either through the National Park into Queensland or through to the coast to service an offshore export facility.

Has Ballina Council taken a stand against Coal Seam Gas mining?



Jeff Johnson and John Clarke recreational fisherman and member of the Ministers Advisory Committee on recreational fishing, on Ballina Beach.

Yes. When I moved my first motion in 2010 to support the call from the NSW Farmers Federation for a moratorium against CSG, most councillors claimed not to know much about the issue, so didn't support it. But we agreed to get more information and invited a state government delegation up.

This actually revealed how little they knew on key issues such as the rights of land-holders, environmental risk, the chemicals used, potential contamination of aquifers etc – and highlighted the lack of regulation. In February 2011, I put a second motion in support of a moratorium until it was proved there would be no negative environmental effects and this was passed. The only Councillor who voted against it declared a pecuniary interest in a local CSG company.

How do you spend your free time?

Free time, what's that? I spend a bit of time relaxing in the hammock, usually listening to music and reading. I play guitar, go to the beach, play squash. I try and escape on a dive boat each year, either up north or in Asia. I love the North Coast and have found my home in the hinterland behind Lennox. It's beautiful up here and when I visit my parents and school friends in Sydney a few times a year it's always a pleasure to come back up and drive around the country roads. I love the uncrowded beaches and open space.

Community Gardens: a plot of sense

by Graeme Williams

Our current food production and distribution system is being challenged by climate change and the rising price of oil. In response, a range of local food systems have emerged as practical alternatives to industrial models.

Along with farmers markets, community gardens represent a more sustainable form of food production that shortens the distance between food producers and consumers. Communal gardens are particularly important in urban settings where residents' access to open space and fresh, affordable produce can be limited.

Community gardens play a role beyond improving access to fresh food. In an increasingly isolated society, community gardens perform a vital social function by providing recreational activity, social interaction and educational opportunities for the local community. Young people, seniors, permaculture enthusiasts and even entrepreneurs can all participate in these shared spaces, often collaboratively.

In the NSW Northern Rivers Region, a recent proliferation in community gardens has spawned a range of micro-businesses and social initiatives, including seedling nurseries, kitchen cafes, art groups, education partnerships and chicken cooperatives that have all found a home alongside more traditional activities like allotments and veggie gardens.

Your local Council can play a vital role in assisting the promotion, development and management of community gardens. While it typically takes a dedicated group with the time and passion to establish a community garden, Councils can be proactive in this process by developing community garden policies that identify suitable sites and define approval pathways through the bureaucracy.

Working with councils can also provide community gardens with legitimacy among the wider community and generate opportunities for training, seed funding and partnerships that enhance the long-term capacity of garden operations.

It's important to resist the common temptation to locate community gardens in hidden or poorly-accessible sites, as

this negates the benefits of community gardens in fostering a greater sense of community and wellbeing.

In a world of fast-food and increasing social alienation, community gardens are transforming the concrete jungles and forgotten corners of our towns and suburbs. In a future where the globalised model of food production and distribution will be seriously challenged, community gardens offer the chance to improve local food security, while reconnecting communities, and to kick-start local economies on the path to a sustainable future.

For more information, see the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network: www.communitygarden.org.au



Member profile Gareth Bryant

What do you do?

I'm a research student in Political Economy and climate justice activist with Friends of the Earth and AID/WATCH.

How long have you been a member?

18 months

What made you decide to join The Greens?

Because we have a grassroots structure where members decide the direction of the party and have strong connections to other movements for social and environmental justice.

Which Greens policy or campaign is most important to you?

Public ownership of health, education, transport and energy, which we need to protect workers' rights, ensure

quality services for all and fight climate change.

What do you think about Bob Brown's retirement?

Perfect timing for Christine Milne to lead The Greens to a successful federal election next year.

What book are you reading at the moment?

"Left Turn", edited by Antony Loewenstein and Jeff Sparrow, featuring an excellent essay on the future of the Australian Greens by Senator Lee Rhiannon.

What's your favourite music?

Punk from the early '80s to the present. My favourite band is The Weakerthans from Canada.

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THE GREENS

Asylum seekers: lives can be saved now

Despite the parliamentary stalemate over asylum seekers, “there are actions that can be taken immediately, which all parties can support, to save lives,” the Australian Greens’ leader, Senator Christine Milne, has announced. These include dramatically increasing the number of people we take from Indonesia and Malaysia and the funding for United Nations operations in those countries. This will open a way of hope for desperate people who will otherwise resort to boats.

The Greens senators are calling for an immediate grant of \$10 million in aid to

the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to speed up processing.

There are more than 8,000 asylum seekers in Indonesia, and only two people in the whole country employed by UNHCR to deal with their cases. UNHCR’s annual budget in Indonesia is only \$6 million, and has been cut since last year. “Right now, the so-called ‘queue’ to be resettled from camps in Indonesia is 76 years long; clearly, the lack of hope in the current system is a major factor pushing people to board dangerous boats,” said Senator Milne.

In addition, Senator Milne has proposed increasing Australia’s humanitarian refugee intake to 20,000 a year and resettling 1,000 asylum seekers from Indonesia and 4,000 people from Malaysia. Australia only takes 60 people, on average, from Indonesia and Malaysia

each year. If Australia announced today that we would take several thousand people from Indonesia and Malaysia, there would be far less pressure to get onto boats.

“There is so much that can be done immediately without the need for legislation, to save the lives of these desperate people who see no hope unless they risk getting onto dangerous boats,” said Senator Milne. “Simply deporting them out of sight and out of mind will not save lives.

“With all parties now on the record supporting increased humanitarian intake of asylum seekers from offshore, surely the Government can and should move ahead with this immediately.”

Senator Hanson-Young, the immigration spokeswoman for the Australian Greens, added: “to resort to offshore processing of people who have made it to Australia

means deporting people who have struggled so hard and made it to Australian territory. It is crude and cruel. It is illegal under international law and, as was shown under John Howard’s harsh regime, it will not save lives.”

The Greens’ have also called for mobilising Australia’s search and rescue capacity in order to avoid repetition of avoidable tragedies in the waters between Australia and Indonesia.

A wide range of organisations, including Labor for Refugees, Amnesty International, Refugee Action Coalition, Refugee Council of Australia and the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, have supported the Australian Greens’ position.

See ‘We can save lives from today’ by Senator Christine Milne at nsw.greens.org.au

Viewpoint

Is the Australian Government complicit in war crimes?

by Tony Harris

Recent US and international press commentary has focussed on revelations about President Obama’s “kill list” and his regular White House meetings to select targets for drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen and elsewhere (including the Philippines). Obama draws up these lists knowing full well that innocent civilians may be killed. Commentators and human rights lawyers argue that these drone strikes, essentially extra-judicial assassinations, may involve commission of war crimes.

Human rights lawyers in Britain recently launched legal action over the human rights abuses inherent in UK intelligence being made available to assist in drone strikes. The human rights lawyer Clive Stafford Smith writing in The Guardian newspaper in Britain on June 2 reported that “at least” 174 children had died in drone strikes in Waziristan in northern Pakistan. (As UNICEF, the United Nations children’s agency, said last year: ‘Even one child death from drone missiles or suicide bombings is one child death too many.’)

Australia is implicated in this “kill chain” through the “joint” intelligence gathering bases at Pine Gap near Alice Springs and Kojarena near Geraldton in WA, bases that through a variety of programs gather intelligence from satellites over the Indian Ocean, the Middle East and South Asia. They are crucial to providing “target” intelligence for Obama’s drone wars and related programs.

Pine Gap, operational since the beginning of the 1970s, was established as a satellite-based intelligence facility to monitor missile tests and the potential nuclear threat from the Soviet Union and China. Since the end of the Cold War, the now designated “joint” US-Australia facility has greatly expanded its role in operations across South Asia and the Middle East as part of the “war on terror”. Pine Gap played a crucial role in intelligence gathering in the lead-up to and the launching of the disastrous war in Iraq. The powerful US satellites it monitors, part of a global system, are a base for the ECHELON intelligence gathering program under the longstanding UKUSA agreement linking the US, the UK, Canada, NZ and Australia. ECHELON uses a computer system that tracks information such as phone numbers, words and voice-prints. This system can identify not just military operations but also the activities of terrorist

suspects or other non-state dissidents, monitoring communications such as the internet and standard or mobile phone traffic. These non-state actors are the prime targets (if not always the prime casualties) for drone attacks.

But it is Kojarena, described by Greens Senator, Scott Ludlam, in August 2008 as “the west coast’s Pine Gap”, which has greatly expanded the capabilities of the ECHELON surveillance system. Located near Geraldton, it extends the reach over south and west Asia and the Middle East through monitoring of satellites positioned over the Indian Ocean. Combined with Pine Gap this gives the two bases responsibility for primary US intelligence across its current principal focus of military operations, encompassing much of the target areas for the drone wars program. Geraldton is also the site of a US Navy secure communications system, which is being set up to provide secure communications directly with US military and CIA operatives.

The operations of these two bases are linked to other Australian and/or joint facilities in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Southern NSW. Richard Tanter, a Melbourne-based analyst (he’s at the Nautilus Institute), writing recently in Arena Magazine, commented on the “extraordinary growth in Australia-US intelligence cooperation over the last decade”, involving “a largely unnoticed regular series of announcements at the annual Australia-US (AUMIN) meetings”. He went on to observe ruefully: “so brazen is the government’s willing subordination, and so powerful the ally, that serious discussion of the operations and consequences of the alliance seems futile”.

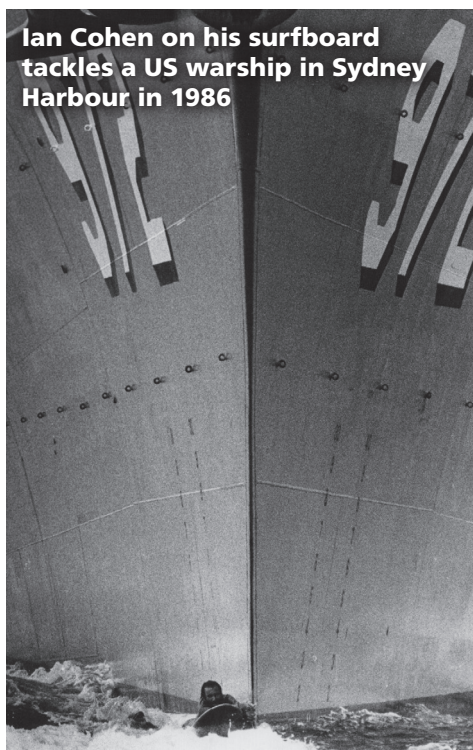
This produces a particular dilemma for The Greens, partly because we currently support a Labor Government in Canberra, and therefore indirectly, that government’s military-security-intelligence arrangements, and partly because of the

fact that The Greens began as an anti-war party. NSW’s first Green MP, Ian Cohen, initially ran as a Greens candidate for the Senate in 1987, using as a campaign poster The Sydney Morning Herald photo of him surfing up Sydney Harbour on the bow wave of a US warship.

However, in more recent times, a sharp Greens antiwar critique has been more muted. For instance, during the Afghan War debate in federal parliament in 2010 no criticism was made of the US-Australian alliance, which is bizarre given it’s the whole reason Australian troops are there.

The Greens have been the party of “inconvenient truth” on asylum seekers and global warming, but in contrast have been reluctant to criticise an alliance that has embroiled us in wars that have cost the lives of hundreds of thousands, an alliance historically founded on racial fear, dating back to the Great White Fleet of 1908. The reasons for caution are not hard to find. A recent Lowy Institute polls show support for the alliance running currently at over 80%. And certainly we are up against powerful political and cultural forces. Historian Peter Edwards has commented that the US-Australia Alliance has almost become part of the de facto constitution, rather like the monarchy! The alliance is also culturally and politically reinforced through the secretive Australian American Leadership Dialogue, in whose activities politicians, academics and leading journalists in the mainstream media are regular participants.

So certainly we should be realistic. If the Greens are to take up the issue of the intelligence bases, we are going to be hammered by the mainstream media, the major parties, and the foreign policy and security elites. But we must do so, showing the same determination and courage as in the (initially equally unpopular) asylum seeker issue. We’ll need the same courage shown by Ian Cohen, when he surfed on a warship bow-wave in 1986.



Ian Cohen on his surfboard tackles a US warship in Sydney Harbour in 1986