



Protect the Bush Alliance

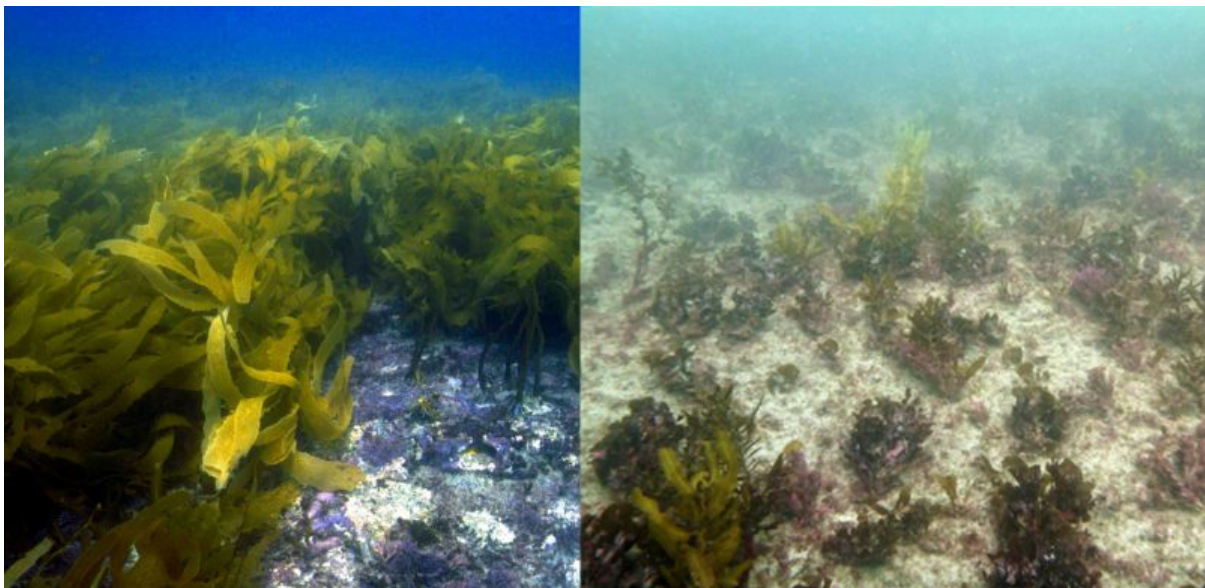
Newsletter March 2017

2016 - another very disappointing year for the environment

Everyone has heard about coral bleaching and no doubt we will hear more about this as we move into Autumn. However we have not heard much about the death of mangroves, the loss of kelp forest on temperate reefs and the impacts of the Tasmanian bushfires. More on these important environmental tragedies can be read here:

<http://ptba.org.au/four-environmental-tragedies-2016/>

Spread the word that global warming is about much more than hot days, storms and power outages.



Rocky reefs off Australia's western coast before (left) and after (right) a 2011 marine heatwave. Image: T. Wernberg

Environmental Impact Statements - cumulative impacts and the inherent risks of narrow scoping and an update on the Jemena pipeline

Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) are usually required prior to the commencement of major projects. However, such Statements are often superficial, subjective and not supported by data and good science. This is highlighted in a discussion of the fauna portion of a recently released EIS for the North Eastern Gas Interconnector (NEGI) <https://ntepa.nt.gov.au/news/2016/open-comment-jemena-northern-gas-pipeline>.

<http://ptba.org.au/a-new-gas-pipeline-from-the-northern-territory-to-queensland/>

The 623km NEGI pipeline will link Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory to Mt Isa in Queensland, and open up the development of the NT's gas industry, in particular shale gas. Ultimately, a connection into the East Coast gas pipeline grid will be constructed.

The NEGI EIS has a significant body of omissions, unfounded or unsupported statements and opinion passed ostensibly as findings. Some of the survey efforts are plausible, but in many cases foundation assumptions and desktop findings are questionable and not robustly supported, and in some cases not supported at all. The EIS has readily identifiable shortcomings and is an exercise in risk negation rather than authentic risk assessment. The NEGI may or may not result in serious impact to the environment, at this stage it is impossible to tell, as the EIS does not provide the information required for a genuine consideration.

The full discussion can be read at this link:

<http://ptba.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/161212oncumimpacts.pdf>

At some point between 19 December 2016 and 17 January 2017, the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (DHEP) received an application from Jemena to amend its existing Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Project. In the week beginning 16 January 2017, DEHP made a decision under section 230 of the Environmental Protection Act 1994 (Qld) (EP Act) that Jemena was not required to provide publicly notification of its application to amend its existing EA for the Project. The amendment application is therefore not available for scrutiny.

PTBA has made a request for full disclosure; the secrecy surrounding the amendment is totally unacceptable.

Colton Mine at Aldershot

Colton Coal plans to develop a coal mine at Aldershot, north of Maryborough in Queensland. The 8-10 year project sees Melaleuca Quinquenervia woodland relinquished to coal mining. This regional eco-system though once the dominant coastal vegetation community along Queensland's south eastern coastline, is now endangered. In addition, there are serious concerns over the planned handling of wastewater from the proposed mine and the potential adverse impacts on the Mary River estuary associated wetlands and endangered migratory shorebirds including the endangered Far-eastern Curlew.



Indeed the cumulative impacts of the possible increased load of waste water contaminants on wader feeding grounds in the Great Sandy Strait has never been considered.

An outline of the background to the Colton Coal mine can be found here:

<http://ptba.org.au/a-planned-new-little-coal-mine-with-a-big-impact-colton-mine-north-of-maryborough/>

Dr Tanzi Smith of the Mary River Catchment Coordination Committee wrote to the Federal Government asking for this to become a Controlled Action (Referral Number 2010/5625)

Dr Smith and the PTBA coordinator, Sheena Gillman, along with members of concerned local environmental groups undertook a survey visit to Aldershot, 18th to the 20th of February. The highlight of the survey weekend culminated in a visit to Tandora, one of the region's most historical cattle properties situated at the junction of the Mary & Susan Rivers, where the grazier, Lindsay Titmarsh, kindly took time out to show us a nest of the Watermouse, *Xeromys myoides*, one of Australia's rarest rodents, and to describe his life long passion for the mangrove and estuary system which bounds Tandora. Lindsay is the author of 'Mary and Susan Sister Rivers of the Fraser Coast' published by Jinglestix ISBN; 9780980392630. This stunning publication carefully documents the flora and fauna of the estuary system from algae, to the many and varied crab species to be found. The documentation in the book confirms that the wealth of biodiversity in the area deserves to be protected. This is not an ordinary coal mine and the Mary/Susan River is not an ordinary river system; these rivers of the Fraser Coast are the lungs of the RAMSAR site and the Great Sandy Straits Marine Park.

PTBA has made further representations on the potential damage that will result from this mine.

Murray's Reserve

Murray's Reserve is a 9.1 hectare Reserve managed by Logan City Council. This reserve which includes a tiny 3 hectare nature refuge, protects a part of the only remaining natural community of *Gossia gonoclada*, (Angle-stemmed myrtle) listed as endangered under the Federal EPBC Act.

The Council had planned to construct an adventure playground in the Reserve but have advised us that an alternative site will be found leaving the Nature Reserve, to be just that. We acknowledge and thank Logan City Council for this admirable decision.

Yandina Wetlands Restored

After a 3-year battle, the 200ha Yandina Creek Wetland is to be restored following the purchase by Unitywater.

Over the last twelve years the floodgates connecting the tidal Yandina Creek to land, previously used for sugar cane farming, fell into disrepair, allowing the site to be inundated. This re-established wetland habitat that occurred naturally prior to farming. The wetlands became significant as a waterbird refuge with a large number of threatened bird and migratory shorebird species using the site including the Curlew Sandpiper and the Australian Painted Snipe.



New floodgates were installed in preparation for a return to sugar cane farming and in July 2015 the gates were shut and the land drained in two days. In September, following Government intervention, a single floodgate was opened and waterbirds started to return. However, the gate was again shut with the entire 200-hectare wetlands drained for the second time in six months leaving a scene of desolation.



Unitywater acquired the properties late last year for \$4.1 million and is implementing a management plan to restore the wetland, with flood-gates being reopened in stages. Water levels at the site this week were boosted by increased flows through drainage canals.

Unitywater is a statutory authority, owned by local councils, that discharges nutrient containing treated effluent from sewage treatment plants into the Maroochy River. The restoration plan allows

Unitywater to offset nutrient release by extracting nutrients and sediments in water that returns to the wetland through reopened floodgates. The project will be overseen by Unitywater infrastructure planning chief Simon Taylor, who has wide experience with rehabilitating wetlands overseas.

The purchase has been in part due to a strong collaborative campaign between community groups and individuals, in particular Greg Roberts, a local birder and Judith Hoyle from BirdLife Southern Queensland.

<http://sunshinecoastbirds.blogspot.com.au/2017/02/yandina-creek-wetland-to-be-restored.html>

<http://birdlife.org.au/media/yandina-wetlands-purchase/>

The restoration will translate into benefits for wetland birds, for nutrient offsetting as well as for the environment generally. It is a great outcome for everyone and a model of what can be achieved through creative community and Government collaborations.

Images courtesy of Greg Roberts

Protect the Bush Alliance - Progress towards Incorporation

Protect the Bush Alliance (PTBA) is an alliance of 39 NGOs and community groups and 100 individual members in Queensland and Australia. Our goal is to implement ways of preventing the continuing loss of areas of high conservation values to inappropriate development. We do this by advocacy as well as by conducting flora and fauna surveys on properties of high conservation value and on the properties which link them.

PTBA Members overwhelmingly voted in favour of the three incorporation motions with 80% approving the incorporation resolutions. We are now in the process of putting together the management team. Dr Stephen Prowse is acting as the interim chair and is working with Sheena Gillman to complete the process of incorporation. A briefing paper was sent to all members discussing the various aspects of incorporation. This can be found on our website at:

<http://ptba.org.au/to-incorporate-or-not-a-briefing-note-to-ptba-members/>

To learn more; visit our website (www.ptba.org.au), join PTBA (it is free) and come to the meeting.