

## A way forward for coal communities

Coalmining communities do not reap the benefits of their industry. A transition to clean energy offers a more healthy and sustainable working future.

Every day, dozens of ships appear off Newcastle harbour, waiting to load up with coal for Asia. Imagine those same ships laden with solar cells and wind turbines, the products of clean energy industries.

In Australia, our electricity use causes 35 per cent of our greenhouse gases. Most of this is from burning coal, which supplies 88 per cent of our electricity. Australia is also the world's largest coal exporter.

Climate change is taking its toll on Australia. Scientists agree we must change our ways or suffer even more dire effects of greenhouse gas pollution. We must develop renewable energy industries and reduce our dependence on coal export dollars.

This positive step is vital for communities which depend on coal, such as those in the New South Wales Hunter Valley. Greenpeace wants to help these communities make the transition to sustainable industries and jobs.

### More coal, more climate change

Despite the obvious threats of climate change caused by burning coal, the federal government continues to expand its coal export market.

Since 1984, Australia's annual coal exports grew from 76 million tonnes a year to more than 200 million tonnes in 2002. By 2010, the volume of Australian coal exports is expected to reach 287 million tonnes, three times the amount of coal Australia uses each year.

Australia exports coal to 35 countries. In 2002-03, 80 per cent (165 million tonnes) went to Asia. The main customers were Japan and South Korea. Taiwan, India, China, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines also use our coal.



A loaded coal train snakes through the Hunter Valley.

### The Hunter Valley, an ecological sacrifice zone

The New South Wales Hunter Valley is ground zero for Australia's coal industry. More than 30 mines cover 220 square kilometres of the valley floor.

The Hunter's major city, Newcastle, is the world's biggest coal exporting port, with the industry expected to grow 20 per cent by decade's end. Eleven new coalmine proposals are currently under consideration. These will encroach on new areas around the Hunter River's headwaters, affecting water and air quality, and biodiversity, displacing farms, houses and established communities.

## What we are doing

**The solutions to climate change are available to everyone. Greenpeace wants to help you use them in your own backyard, workplace and university, and get the message across to Australia's leaders: We need clean energy now!**

### In Australia, Greenpeace:

- > Works with local groups to assist people in the Hunter Valley, New South Wales, move from coal dependence to a healthy, sustainable economy.
- > Aims to reduce Australia's massive coal exports.
- > Encourages state and federal governments to adopt clean energy targets of 20 per cent by 2020.
- > Works on stopping new coal plants and ensuring that energy efficiency and clean energy meet our needs.
- > Works with universities and communities to make the switch to clean energy.
- > Promotes clean energy in retirement villages and builds a Grey Power Network to protect the environment our grandchildren will inherit.

### In the Pacific, Greenpeace:

- > Encourages Pacific Island nations to adopt clean energy targets.
- > Works with church leaders to raise awareness of climate change's damaging impact on lives and land as sea levels rise.
- > Helps communities in Thailand oppose a proposed coal plant that will be powered by Australian coal.
- > Assists the isolated Pacific island nation of Niue as it considers becoming the world's first 100 per cent renewable nation.

**Internationally, Greenpeace ensures industrialised nations (which have pumped out most of the world's greenhouse pollution) cut emissions and lead the clean energy revolution.**

**Turn over to discover how you can join the clean energy revolution!**



Newcastle has made the successful transition from a steel city to a clean energy champion.



Clean industries, like solar and wind, bring jobs, an economic future and a healthy environment.

## Coalmining: Who really benefits?

Four foreign-owned multinationals dominate Australia's coal industry: BHP Billiton, Xstrata, Rio Tinto and Anglo-American. They produce 72 per cent of Australia's coal. So most of our coalmining profits disappear overseas.

In 10 years, coal industry employment has fallen, while exports have boomed and coal prices skyrocketed. Jobs in Hunter mines have fallen from 10,000 in 1990 to about 6800 in 2003, according to New South Wales government figures, while production has doubled.

Only a fraction of income from Hunter-mined coal is reinvested regionally in infrastructure. The region suffers unemployment far above the New South Wales average. Its poor health, education and transport services are constantly under threat of cuts.

## A just transition

A just transition is a process to protect the wellbeing of vulnerable coalmining communities as they make the shift to clean and sustainable energy. A just transition creates partnerships between communities, trade unions, governments and businesses to promote sustainable development.

Hunter Valley communities are increasingly ready for the transition. In February, 2005, Singleton's mayor, Fred Harvison, sought to declare Singleton Shire's eastern half a mine-free zone after decades of mining had left the western half a "lunar landscape". The mayor noted, "We

don't want to end up with a despoiled area and no future prospects."

Minewatch, which has monitored Hunter mines for over 20 years, is calling for a moratorium on new coal mines.

Newcastle is showing how to make the transition from unsustainable industries. When BHP closed its Newcastle steel works in the 1990s, many predicted the town would close down too. But Newcastle has undergone a vibrant renaissance and is now a hub for

tourism, wine, filmmaking and other arts. Newcastle City Council has championed a plan to turn the city into a clean-energy centre of excellence and leads the way with its energy efficiency initiatives.

Just as Newcastle has made a successful transition from steel, Greenpeace wants to help coal communities create a sustainable working future.

## Government doublespeak

The Howard government refuses to ratify the Kyoto Protocol because, it says, the global climate treaty doesn't require developing nations to reduce greenhouse pollution. Yet the government spends billions locking those same countries into using polluting coal for energy.

From 1993 to 2003, Australia's export credit agency (EFIC), gave \$7.6 billion to facilitate coal exports and fossil fuel power infrastructure. It gave just \$67 million to renewable energy, less than one per cent of its coal spending.

The New South Wales government is also hypocritical, acknowledging global warming as a serious threat while approving new coalmines and considering building more coal fired power stations.

## What you can do

- > Subscribe to Switched On, a free Greenpeace email newsletter about clean energy solutions. To subscribe, email [switchedon@greenpeace.org.au](mailto:switchedon@greenpeace.org.au)
- > Download the Switched On guide for tips on how to save energy and take action: [www.greenpeace.org.au/climate](http://www.greenpeace.org.au/climate)
- > Demand clean energy from your government. We need a national clean energy target of 20 per cent by 2020. Tell your local, state and federal government member to play their part in a 20 x 20 renewable energy vision.
- > Buy clean energy right now! Call your electricity company and sign up to 100% clean electricity. For information and suppliers, go to [www.greenpower.com.au](http://www.greenpower.com.au).
- > Save energy. Buy energy efficient appliances and lightbulbs, turn off appliances at the switch, and walk or take public transport instead of driving.
- > Consider replacing your electric hot water with a climate-friendly solar system to save energy and money.

**Stay up to date with the clean energy revolution. Visit [www.greenpeace.org.au/climate](http://www.greenpeace.org.au/climate)**



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