

Galilee Basin News

Environmental concerns over mega coal mines

CONCERNS about long term damage to the environment is fuelling opposition to the huge coal mining projects proposed around Alpha.

Prominent in the debate is Paola Cassoni who created the Bimblebox Nature Reserve on the Glen Innes property about 100kms from Alpha. The reserve is at the western edge of the Brigalow Belt North bioregion, already significantly degraded by mining in the Bowen Basin.

Bimblebox Nature Reserve has been restored to native vegetation and 130 species of wildlife have been identified on the property – 15 of which have conservation significance for the Desert Uplands region.

"It needs to be properly understood that the projects proposed for the Galilee Basin are significant on a global scale," Ms Cassoni said.

The fact that new mines are assessed on a one-by-one basis is likely to result in a dangerously low estimate of the total impact on the region's water systems, biodiversity and landscape."

The major threat posed by the mines was to water supplies according to Patricia Julien of the Mackay Conservation Group.

"All these mines will be in the headwater floodplains of the Belyando River which flows into the Burdekin Dam, which supplies water to Townsville," Ms Julien said.

A much smaller Ensham Mine of seven million tonnes per annum near Emerald flooded two years ago and contaminated community water supplies all the way to the coast.

"These waters travelled the same distance to the coast that they would

from the headwaters of the Belyando River to the Burdekin Dam.

"We cannot afford contamination of that water resource.

"Some 182 waterways will be crossed by the proposed Hancock Railway Line which is seeking a 500m wide corridor 495 km long from its coal leases north of Apha township to Abbot Point north of Bowen.

"The terminus sits across three Great Barrier Reef creek catchments 10-15 km from the Reef waters. There are no plans for a protective buffer zone from coal stockpile wastewater leakages around the nationally listed wetland at Abbot Point.

"The roads to the coal terminals are at ground level. The coastal plain is at high risk of storm surge and flooding, so pollution into the wetlands and ocean is inevitable."



The western rangelands occupies less than 10 percent of the Brigalow Belt North Bioregion and Alpha is at the western extremity. This photo is of the Bimblebox Nature Reserve all of which is planned to be part of a Hancock Coal open cut mine.

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Paola Cassoni protesting the Bligh government for permitting coal mining in the Bimblebox Nature Reserve at the recent government community cabinet meeting in Townsville.



Black Orchid (*Cymbidium canaliculatum*) found at the Bimblebox Nature Reserve.



Grevillea juncifolia (honeysuckle grevillea). The Rainbow Bee-eater is a migratory bird.



Visiting brolgas.



Binoe's gecko (*Heteronotia binoei*).

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