

MEDIA RELEASE:

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COAL DOCUMENTARY DRAWS SELL-OUT CROWDS

A documentary about landholders battling the expansion of the coal industry made its Queensland premiere in Brisbane this week, attracting a crowd that was spilling out of the cinema doors and onto the pavement.

Almost 300 people attended the initial screening of *Bimblebox* at Tribal Theatre (the old Dendy) in Brisbane, followed by a panel discussion that included scientists, clean energy advocates, and Paola Cassoni who co-owns Bimblebox Nature Refuge.

Bimblebox Nature Refuge, an 8000ha property near Alpha in Queensland's Central West, is the setting of a test case in which mining magnate Clive Palmer's company Waratah Coal is pushing ahead with plans to turn the privately-owned nature refuge into part of a mega-mine that would begin opening up an area known as the Galilee Basin.

Bimblebox, which made its world premiere at the Byron Bay Film Festival last weekend, is being rolled out via screenings at regional and metropolitan centres across Australia.

Ms Cassoni has been battling to save Bimblebox Nature Refuge, an ecological oasis in the otherwise heavily cleared Desert Uplands bioregion, for four years. But she said the burgeoning public interest in the documentary was heartening.

"The public reception to this film tells us that more and more people are becoming aware of the danger of just burying our heads in the sand when it comes to future land use in this country," Ms Cassoni said.

"This documentary isn't just about Bimblebox Nature Refuge – it's about landholders all over Queensland and New South Wales who are using all of their efforts to stem the tide of the coal mining and coal seam gas.

"These polluting and out-of-date industries are threatening to destroy highly valuable conservation areas such as Bimblebox Nature Refuge, as well as the very land that can feed us into the future."

The idea for the documentary came about when US filmmaker Mike O'Connor heard about the case of Bimblebox Nature Refuge, which under the Waratah Coal plan would become 52% open-cut coal mine, with the rest of the property subject to long-wall underground mining.

"My sincere thanks go to Michael O'Connell, who donated his creative time and efforts to this project, as well as the country folks who believed this was an important story to tell, and helped to finance the project," Ms Cassoni said.

Mr O'Connell is an experienced environmental documentary filmmaker, having previously made *Mountain Top Removal*, an award-winning documentary about coal mining in the US region of Appalachia.

"Australia is the world's largest exporter of coal, feeding one-third of the world's supply," Mr O'Connell said. "It is impossible to address climate change without looking at Australia's role in the planet's climate future."

Waratah Coal's plan for the Galilee Coal Northern Export Facility Project – also known as China First Coal Project – attracted more than 1800 submissions in the Environmental Impact Statement process late last year, and is now being considered by the Coordinator-General.

During Tuesday night's panel discussion, Ms Cassoni spoke about the impact of coal expansion.

"We would all hope that the place where we live, the home where we share and care with our family and friends, feels good, safe, secure ... normal," she said. "Not so in Central Queensland where I come from. Our place is in turmoil."

As of last night, the next screening of *Bimblebox*, to be held in Toowoomba tonight, was also sold out, bar 20 seats.

For more on the documentary including future screenings, how to host screenings, or to order a copy of the DVD, visit bimbleboxdocumentary.com

Media contacts:

Paola Cassoni is available for interview, ph: 0459 956 240 or 07 4985 3474

For more about the Brisbane screening, contact Alexandra Mercer, ph: 0439 532 506

Photos attached:

Bimblebox-1 – The crowd at Tribal Theatre pours into the street before the Queensland premiere of *Bimblebox* in Brisbane

Bimblebox-2 – The panel discussion that followed the Brisbane screening

Bimblebox-3 – Still image of Paola Cassoni from the documentary *Bimblebox*

Panellists at the Queensland premiere event were (left to right):

- Megan Evans, Conservation Planning Researcher at the University of Queensland
- Dr Craig Allen, a US ecologist who has done research at Bimblebox. He is studying the effects of climate stress on forest health and tree mortality around the world
- Dr Bradley Smith, co-founder of the Six Degrees campaign at Friends of the Earth, which works to address Queensland's dependency on coal and coal seam gas
- Paola Cassoni, Bimblebox Nature Refuge co-owner
- Adam Stone, Greens candidate for Mt Coot-tha in the state election
- Sue Cooke, Beyond Zero Emissions presenter, who shares the NGO's technical model of how Australia could have 100% renewable stationary energy by 2020
- Alexandra Mercer, MC.

Representatives of other political parties also were invited to be part of the panel.