

The Bimblebox Alliance Inc. President's Annual Report 2017

Dear everyone,

2017 has been very quiet in the Eastern Desert Uplands. Although this is good news for Bimblebox and landowners of the adjacent proposed [mine sites](#), the townships of Alpha and Jericho are still yearning for a mining boom. One hundred and fifty or so kilometres to the north east instead, Clermont may have some chances of increased employment with the Adani mine if it ever goes ahead, but even then the job bonanza advertised by Adani and the Govt will only be a fraction in real terms.

Palmer is busy elsewhere anyway. He is transforming his cattle station (after he tried to sell it) into the Styx Coal Project near Rockhampton.

- During the first part of the year we were busy submitting our take on the Special Wildlife Reserves Bill, a proposal to declare a new category of nature refuges. The Bill was still on the second reading in the [Parliamentary notice paper](#) when put in limbo by the dissolution of the Government and we are waiting to see if it will be debated by the new Parliament. In any case, while the Bill could have been a possible step in the right direction, it did not protect the existing Private Protected Areas from exploration and mining and even SWRs needed the approval of the Department of Natural Resources and Mines before they were declared. Again conservation areas, no matter how pristine, play second fiddle to mining and infrastructure. We may still have an opportunity to raise these issues.

- At least three years ago the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection started to investigate lodged complaints from landowners (me included) regarding rehabilitation of exploration drill holes. Finally in July I was summoned as a witness for the prosecution of Waratah Coal Pty Ltd. I was preparing for any questioning, but it turned out to be a frustrating process because at the eleventh hour Waratah Coal (WC) pleaded guilty to two charges of contravening a condition of an Environmental Authority. On 9 August WC was fined \$17,500 and a conviction was not recorded.

Never mind the 'enormity' of the fine, which no doubt will deter any proponent from contravening EAs in the future, but when the Court only orders WC to pay \$5,932.50 to DEHP ... well, the taxpayer of course foots the balance of what I estimate to be no less than a million dollars' bill. If WC had not entered a last minute guilty plea, they would have been prosecuted, and if found guilty, their costs would have been much higher. Apparently this last minute strategy is used often by Palmer.

- Queensland State election time came and went without active input on our part. Our last election determinations to reach out to the ALP were full of naïve expectations. Once Labor was elected, the requests we put to a young enviro minister to deliver good news for nature refuges and to implement a much needed moratorium on broad scale land clearing had no immediate effect. The issue remains on our agenda. The EDO, of which we are proud Aussie supporters, has persisted and in their policy document they ask to *“(33) Provide for strict no go areas for petroleum, gas and mining activities including pipelines and infrastructure as follows: (a) in and within 10km of all public and private protected areas including national parks, conservation reserves, nature refuges, and areas of high biodiversity by amendments to the Nature Conservation Act 1992 (NC Act)”*.

- The very first documentary that in 2012 alerted Australians to the massive thermal coal deposits in the Galilee was 'Bimblebox' by Michael O'Connell. As 'Guarding the Galilee', a documentary on the threats of the Adani mine, is screened around Australia, we are seeing a 'Bimblebox' revival and the requests for more screenings in Qld, NSW and Vic.

- The Stop Adani movement also brought more people visiting the NR, a welcoming point to anyone interested in the biodiversity of the Desert Uplands and the people of the Galilee.

- A mention as always to our artists as so much has been achieved through their art work and the organizational skills of Jill Sampson and Beth Jackson. The State Library of Queensland has now made the Bimblebox [Art Project Ephemera](#) accessible to visitors and researchers – including a collection of catalogues, invitations, articles, signs, etc., of the two main exhibitions: Bimblebox: [art – science – nature](#) and Bimblebox [153 Birds](#). Thanks Jill!

In February the Bimblebox: art – science – nature completed its three year national tour with more than 45,000 people (according to researcher Andrew Nicholson, Bimblebox exhibition research, University of New England) going through the doors of the many art galleries that hosted it.

Now the Bimblebox 153 Birds installation is growing from a one-off venture to gain wider exhibition and in January 2018 the [Mary Cairncross Rainforest Discovery Centre](#) near Maleny (approximately 14,000 visitors a month) will host the project. Volunteers needed to help with installation on 3 & 4 January. Email Jill on jill.sampson@bigpond.com if you think you can help.

In September, our art, science and nature camp wasn't well attended as many artists had previous commitments and were preparing for or holding their own exhibitions, some about Bimblebox, like [Jennifer Stuerzl's](#).

- Three new species of birds (Pink-eared Duck, Pacific Baza and Peregrine Falcon) have been found on Bimblebox this year, by naturalists Eric Anderson and Diana O'Connor.

- Our main fundraiser of the year is going well, with the first of hopefully many Galilee Basin and Bimblebox Calendars. We have sold ¾ of them and we hope that Woodford (and maybe the Mary Cairncross Rainforest Discovery Centre) will sell the remainder for us.

- Jude Garlick, our Secretary, went to live in Brighton, Melbourne, Victoria, but is still an active proponent of Bimblebox, having already given a talk in Melbourne to accompany the Bob Brown mini film being shown alongside Guarding the Galilee. The Queensland Government regulations say that the Secretary of an incorporated association must live in Queensland or not far away, so we hope that a new Secretary will be elected. Thanks to Jude for being our Secretary in this last year, and thanks so much to all members and committee members who helped on a voluntary basis with raising funds, talks, interviews, admin, research, editing, investigations, website revamp, etc.

I have never witnessed so many groups and individuals of all ages protesting in one way or another as I see against Adani. We may well say the Carmichael mine is a dead duck, but my sincere wish for 2018 is that there is no slouching and this new wave of environmental awareness will gravitate to other worthy causes.

Best wishes, Paola Cassoni,
President, The Bimblebox Alliance Inc.