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## HOPE E-news Bulletin #22, 4 August 2009

Hello all,

### **Help HOPE to promote sustainable living practices in your community**

You are invited to join HOPE and help us promote sustainable living practices in your community. Membership to HOPE is free and open to anyone who is interested, including individuals, families, businesses and organizations.

HOPE principal focus is on:

1. Raising awareness - letting people know about these issues
2. Education - suggestions on how to tackle these issues
3. Showing - how easily it can be done

HOPE employs several strategies to achieve its primary aims - including our Mutual Support Partnership program; setting up permanent Environmental Information Displays in libraries, universities and environment centres; and staging information displays at a variety of community events.

Whether you live in urban, rural or regional Australia, you too can lessen your impact on the global environment, by adopting sustainable living practices at home, at work and at school.

HOPE's head office is located in Toowoomba, Queensland and has members and supporters throughout Australia. We hold face-to-face meetings four times years, whilst keeping in regular contact by email and through our website. *Think globally, but act locally.*

*"Our personal consumer choices have ecological, social, and spiritual consequences.  
It is time to re-examine some of our deeply held notions that underlie our lifestyles."  
by David Suzuki*

Miriam Sharp, Secretary - [office@hopeaustralia.org.au](mailto:office@hopeaustralia.org.au)

### **Office news**

#### **Extract from members' meeting of 15 July 2009**

Following HOPE's first *Low Carbon Diet* information session held on Wednesday 15 July, a brief members' meeting was held to ratify the minutes of the previous meeting; receive an update on LCD project; to discuss funding opportunities to produce a DVD on the topic of "Local Visions for Climate Change adaptation on the Darling Downs"; to adopt motions (1) to stage a Toowoomba Sustainable House Day on 13 September and (2) to investigate options for a Solar Neighbourhood Program for Toowoomba Regional Council area.

### Thank you's:

Thank you very much to Mrs. J. Crowley for your donation. It is much appreciated.

Also, a big thanks to the USQ Public Relations students who undertook the development of a comprehensive *Marketing and Public Relations Strategies report* for the HOPE organisation.

### HOPE Low Carbon Diet (LCD) events news

HOPE has a number of LCD related activities occurring over the next 2 weeks and your support and assistance would be appreciated. Help is needed to transport display furniture to and from various events; to assist with setting up, staffing the display area and to pack up. Please phone Frank on 4639 2135 to offer your services.

#### Events schedule:

6 August - LCD Information Session, Crow's Nest Community & RSL Centre, 25 William St

7 August - Brisbane Energy Efficiency Seminar, Parliament House, William St

9 August - LCD display at Toowoomba Languages & Cultures Festival, Queens Park

10 August - NAB Mini Enviro Expo, LCD display at Grand Central

11 August - LCD display at K-Mart, Ruthven St, Toowoomba

12 August - LCD display at Clifford Gardens, cnr James St & Anzac Ave, Toowoomba

14 August - LCD display at Grand Central, cnr Margaret & Dent Sts, Toowoomba

### Updates on upcoming events

**Free energy efficiency seminar, Friday 7 August 2009**, Parliament House, George Street, Brisbane. Places are strictly limited. To register please call: Environment and Resources Committee (ERC) Secretariat, 1800 504 022, (07) 3406 7908 or email [erc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:erc@parliament.qld.gov.au). For further information about the ERC visit [www.parliament.qld.gov.au/erc](http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/erc). The ERC is conducting these seminars as part of an inquiry into energy efficiency improvements. The issues paper for the inquiry is available at [www.parliament.qld.gov.au/view/committees/ERC.asp?SubArea=inquiries](http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/view/committees/ERC.asp?SubArea=inquiries). The closing date for written submissions is 14 August 2009.

The EcoCentre, Griffith University, is hosting an **Organic Food Forum** on **Thursday, August 13th at 6.00pm**. The forum will provide information such as: What is Organic food and how it's grown. How is it different from food grown with synthetic chemicals? Is it really better for us and is it better for the environment? What issues are facing the worldwide organic industry. There will also be organic produce to examine and food to taste with locally grown organic food provided.

Speakers on the evening are:

- **Dr Kristen Lyons** a Senior Lecturer with the Griffith University, School of Biomolecular and Physical Sciences.
- **Marg Will** the General Manager of the organic certification body Organic Food Chain will provide an insider's look at the organic industry in Australia and worldwide, as well as international legislative requirements.
- **Les Nichols**, an organic farmer from Sandy Creek Organic Farm will share his wealth of experience and knowledge about organic farming.

Come along to find out everything you always wanted to know about Organic Food. RSVP to (07) 3735 7992 or email [L.Malcolm@griffith.edu.au](mailto:L.Malcolm@griffith.edu.au).

[15-23 August - National Science Week](#) - Find an event near you!

## Moreton Bay Region Sustainable Living Expo - 22 August 2009

This year's theme for the Moreton Bay Region **Sustainable Living Expo 2009** is the "Future of Food" and is on **Saturday August 22**. Speakers and workshop presenters will provide informative talks on different aspects of food sustainability for people and the environment. Over 100 exhibitors will showcase sustainable products, the dedicated work of local community groups and environmental initiatives by various levels of Government. A variety of food and entertainment will be provided for all ages. The Moreton Bay Region Sustainable Living Expo is an Annual event run by the local not-for-profit, Friends of CREEC (Caboolture Region Environmental Education Centre) and is the largest "green" expo of its kind in the Moreton Bay Region, with attendance in 2008 estimated between 4000 and 5000. Parking is available on site at **150 Rowley Rd, Burpengary** or take the FREE bus running regularly throughout the day from Burpengary train station. **Entry is \$2 for Adults, Children under 12, free.**

[24-30 August - Keep Australia Beautiful Week](#)

## Climate News



### ClimateSmart Business

Information, contacts, tools and programs to help your business cut carbon, save money and stay competitive. [More...](#)



### ClimateSmart Retail

Buying energy and water efficient appliances has never been easier. To find out more [click here](#).

## [Environmentalists welcome rebate scheme](#)

The Environment Centre says the Northern Territory Government's new rebate on energy-efficient items will help households reduce their energy use and save money on power.

## [Act now on climate change or pay later: expert says](#)

The Climate Change Institute in Canberra has warned that Australia must think beyond the emissions trading scheme, if it wants to have an impact on global warming

## **New Report Shows Risks of Climate Change**

Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, has released a new report which found that climate change is happening faster than earlier thought and the risks are more serious. Prepared by Professor Will Steffen, Executive Director of the ANU Climate Change Institute, '*Climate change 2009: Faster change and more serious risks*' draws on the science of climate change since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2007 Fourth Assessment Report. Key findings of the report include:

- The climate system appears to be changing faster than earlier thought likely.
- The need for effective reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is urgent, to avoid the risk of crossing dangerous thresholds in the climate system.
- Once thresholds in ice sheet and carbon cycle dynamics are crossed, such processes cannot be stopped or reversed by human intervention.

To download the report, visit the Department of Climate Change website at [www.climatechange.gov.au](http://www.climatechange.gov.au).

## Feature Article

### **Big mine, big subsidies, big cover up - Australia's resource-full economy** by Lyn Spence

The expansion of the Olympic Dam mine will be the single biggest project in South Australia's history. The proposed open cut mine will create the biggest hole-in-the-ground in the southern hemisphere and will become the largest copper and uranium quarry on the planet. It is estimated that the 44 billion tonnes of overburden will create a new mountain range - the highest artificial mountain range on Earth.

Before this project can commence the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which has taken BHP-Billiton (BHP-B) over 5 years to prepare and contains thousands of pages of detailed analysis, must address all major issues connected with the expansion of this mine. Even though this is the largest and possibly most important environmental impact statement Australia has ever seen the public consultation period is a mere 14 weeks - just a few weeks longer than the time allocated for public comment on small development projects like a regional shopping centre or a city grandstand.

South Australia's peak environmental body the Conservation Council of South Australia (CCSA), has criticised BHP-Billiton after the release of the EIS stating that it is flawed and that it is concerned that the waste that will be produced at the expanded mine will contaminate air, water and the surrounding fragile environment. The uranium industry in Australia has a disastrous environmental track record with publicly released reports detailing an ever increasing list of leaks, spills, contamination and safety breaches. These reports clearly indicate that some of the current methods used in the mining and storage of the ore and waste are dangerously inadequate and it is questionable whether the radioactive waste can be properly managed so that it may be safely contained for the thousands of years that it remains a potential hazard to health and the environment. There is little evidence in the EIS that current practices will change or improve with the commencement of the new project. The fact that the tailings 'storage' facility is designed to leak an average of 3 million litres of radioactive waste a day and that BHP plans to line only 15 per cent of the proposed tailings facility confirms that there are still very serious issues to be addressed.

The existing Olympic Dam mine currently draws 35 million litres of water a day from the Great Artesian Basin (GAB). Incredibly, under the 1982 Roxby Downs Indenture Ratification Act BHP-B pays nothing for the water. While the rest of the country, including our food producers, are on severe water restrictions this mining giant freely extracts, uses and contaminates massive amounts of our rapidly dwindling water resource. The company is licensed to take up to 42 million litres a day from the GAB but even this will not be enough for the needs of the thirsty new mine where estimates indicate that water requirements will balloon out to 150 million litres a day. To meet their requirements BHP-B intends to build a large scale desalination plant in the Upper Spencer Gulf. Environmentalists and the Gulf fishing industry feel that this would be the worst possible place to build the plant and strongly believe that the tens of thousands of litres of super-saline water the desalination plant would release into the shallow, low flushing gulf will cause irreversible damage to the sensitive marine ecosystems.

While proponents of nuclear power continually tout the benefits of emission-free nuclear power plants they seem to conveniently ignore and refuse to factor in the enormous amount of power required to mine the uranium to run the power stations. This is a crucial part of the full nuclear power process and it seems irresponsible to dismiss this energy intensive part of the cycle. At full production, Olympic Dam will use one-third of South Australia's current electricity requirements and will consume 1 million litres of Federal Government subsidised diesel a day just to reach the ore.

The Roxby Downs Indenture Act has also exempted 1.5 million hectares of land around the Olympic Dam mine from being subject to important environmental legislation and allows BHP-Billiton complete control over the release of information regarding its activities at the mine and its surrounds. The Conservation Council of South Australia have stated that, "BHP-Billiton should be prepared to play by the same set of rules as any other miner or developer in South Australia and therefore should be able to operate without the legal privileges contained within the Roxby Downs Indenture Ratification Act." They say that, "If BHP-B is not causing environmental harm, it should be willing to comply with the Environment Protection Act."

BHP-B claim they have made provision to maintain the billions of tonnes of overburden and tailings dams for 200 years and yet this toxic waste will remain radioactive and dangerous for tens of thousands of years. The company's track record on previous environmental practices is deplorable and we can simply scan their 'footprint' in past mining operations to see evidence of ongoing environmental disasters. Alarm bells should ring when we read

past articles about the company's operations. A 1999 news report states, "One of World's Worst Mine Disasters Gets Worse - BHP Admits Massive Environmental Damage at Ok Tedi Mine in Papua New Guinea, Says Mine Should Never Have Opened" and a more recent ABC News report from the New South Wales' Hunter River reported, "Safety fears over BHP's toxic sludge" How can we have any confidence in proposed safety practices laid out in the EIS for the new mine when we see that BHP-B has failed so many times in the past.

There can be absolutely no mistakes made when dealing with uranium, this is a unique mineral with unique and long term risks - every possible effort must be made to prevent devastating environmental outcomes that could leave a toxic legacy for future generations to deal with.

If BHP-B were to be held fully responsible for any future environmental destruction or adverse health effects due to exposure to ionising radiation from radioactive materials and waste we could feel a little more confident that the most stringent environmental and world's best mining practice would be met - unfortunately, it seems that this will not be the case.

To conclude - The insightful words of a Cree Prophecy:

*"When all the trees have been cut down, when all the animals have been hunted, when all the waters are polluted, when all the air is unsafe to breathe, only then will you discover you cannot eat money".*

## Around the Nation

### Stop the Olympic Dam uranium mine expansion!

Friends of the Earth is asking concerned citizens to consider sending a submission opposing the plan to turn the Olympic Dam (Roxby Downs) mine in SA into the biggest uranium mine in the world. For more info on this issue go to <http://www.foe.org.au/anti-nuclear/issues/oz/u/roxby/> Submissions on Draft EIS are due August 7, 2009. If you don't have time to write a submission yourself, you can cut and paste the submission on the website below, and email it to the SA government - it will only take a minute. <http://www.foe.org.au/anti-nuclear/issues/take-action/odmeis>

### Recycling at the WACA - Perth WA

Cricket fans will be encouraged to *Do the Right Thing* and recycle thanks to a partnership between the PSF (Packing Stewardship Forum) and the Western Australia Cricket Association Ground (WACA). Patrons and visitors to the well-known venue will now have access to improved public place recycling systems. *(Sourced from PSF News, June 2009)*

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### From G Magazine, July/August edition:

#### *Solar Panel Buying Guide*

With increased demand and government rebates, solar panels are starting to enter the domain of affordable. There are plenty of manufacturers and different types of solar panels, so how do you choose? The latest issue of *G Magazine* - Australia's leading green lifestyle publication - provides an all-you-need-to-know guide to solar panels, from how many you need and which models to choose, to whether you should tap into the grid or opt for stand-alone.

#### *How to Save Rainwater Without A Tank And On A Budget*

Rainwater tanks are one way to collect nature's free bounty, but simple earthworks and smart planning can turn even the most barren desert into a lush oasis. *G Magazine* showcases one success story and details 8 simple principles to harvesting rainwater on a shoestring budget.

#### *Greening Your Workplace*

*G Magazine's* eight-page special on greening your workplace covers all you need to know about making your job a little more eco-friendly. From ideas for convincing your boss to go green, to what to do with old computers, to 10 eco-tips to try when you're on the job.

Go to [www.gmagazine.com.au](http://www.gmagazine.com.au) for more information on these stories, or get your copy of the magazine at your newsagent.

## Overseas News

### [75 million to flee climate change: report](#)

A new report says climate change could produce 75 million refugees in the Asia Pacific region in the next 40 years.

### [Vote For the "7 Wonders of the Natural World"](#)

Recently, 28 finalists were announced in the search for the "Seven Wonders of the Natural World" initiative, being sponsored by the New 7 Foundation. Of the 28, the public has been given the task of voting to choose 7, and the foundation hopes to get over 1 billion votes. This program was launched to foster conservancy, both of the specific wonders and of the world's ecosystems in general, and the non-profit hopes to inspire the citizens of the world through ecotourism and increased publicity and public sympathy for conservancy. You can vote online. Visit the ENN Community: <http://blog.enn.com/>

[Risks of genetically modified food](#). There is a suspicion that the steep rise in allergies and many other health problems is not due solely to environmental irritants, but to GM products, as well. [Maple Ridge News](#), Canada.

[Samsung to spend \\$4bn on eco-tech](#). Samsung Electronics, Asia's biggest producer of chips, flat-panel screens and mobile phones, announced plans to invest \$4.3bn by 2012 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. [London Financial Times](#), England.

## Resources

[www.EthicalJobs.com.au](http://www.EthicalJobs.com.au) - Looking for a job that you can be really passionate about? EthicalJobs.com.au is a jobs site for people looking for an ethical job or career, and for employers who see their organisations as contributing to a more equitable, more just or more sustainable world. We feature jobs from all sectors including government jobs, for-profit jobs and non-profit jobs, with a focus on community sector jobs, social justice jobs, and green jobs/ environmental jobs.

### **Wind Farm Industry Policy Statement**

The Australian Government has recently released a Wind Farm Industry Policy Statement, for more details, visit [www.environment.gov.au/epbc/policy/index.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/policy/index.html) or contact the Community Information Unit on 1800 803 772.

## Landcare/NRM news

### **Mining impacts on natural resources and agriculture**

Landholders and organisation from across the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin helped draft a regional response to increased mining and energy activity at a meeting in Moonie recently.

Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC) Chief Executive Officer Geoff Penton said "as the mining and energy sector continued to expand in the region, there is a real need for a base response document which could be drawn upon by any organisation. We've been raising the issue of the potential impact of mining on our natural resources for some time, including on good quality agricultural land, the region's water resources, biodiversity and vegetation."

"QMDC is not opposed to mining and energy sector activities in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin because of the important economic and social development they brought to the region. What we do want, however, is to minimise the potential impact of the industries on both natural resources and agricultural production," Mr Penton said.

The organisation's members raised a number of issues at the Moonie meeting, including the need for better monitoring coupled with a sharing of that information. A number of people raised concerns about the fact we don't have a good baseline understanding of the impact mining and energy sector

activities have on natural resources, particularly when there might be several different operations in one area.

Mr Penton said the development of a base set of responses that could be used by any community organisation when responding to Environmental Impact Statements or discussions on the cumulative impacts, was important.

For further information visit the [QMDC website](#)

### **Website sorts native frogs from cane toads**

NQ Dry Tropics has developed a website to help residents distinguish native frogs from the exotic cane toad. NQ Dry Tropics Project Manager Meredith Anderson said the website, Frogs not canetoads website, was a great way for school students and members of the community to become familiar with the native frogs found in our backyards that look similar to the cane toad. "Australia has some wonderfully unique biodiversity and frogs are no exception," Ms Anderson said. "We have a wide range of native frogs many of which have brown colourings and can at times be mistaken for cane toads." "While we support the humane control of cane toads, an introduced species to Australia, we urge the community to be certain that they are not harming native frogs by mistake," she said. The website contains a range of photos and information provided by herpetologist Marion Anstis, on native frogs occurring in both rural and urban areas of the Burdekin Dry Tropics NRM region, an area that extends from Alpha in the south to Townsville and Greenvale in the north. Ms Anderson said "The frogs not cane toads website has tips on how to distinguish between native frogs and cane toads at different life stages." "We are all responsible for protecting our unique wildlife in Australia even our smaller creatures like frogs," Ms Anderson said. The website is funded under the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative.

### **Cane farm and reef set to benefit**

The first artificial wetland of its type in the Burdekin region is set to be developed on a local cane farm. The concept was discussed at a recent workshop aimed to bring cane farmers and wetland construction experts together. The workshop was held by NQ Dry Tropics and WetlandCare Australia - which was funded under the Australian Government's Caring for our Country Reef Rescue initiative. WetlandCare Australia Team Leader Nic Cobcroft said cane growers Vince and Rita Papale have seized the opportunity of funding support to rehabilitate a former wetland, which until now has been a less productive and seasonally wet area of the farm. "The wetland will help to improve water quality leaving the property and entering the Great Barrier Reef, and spoil from the site will be used to boost overall farm productivity," Mr Cobcroft said. "The idea for resurrecting the wetland came from looking at cane farms in the Mackay and Tully districts where artificial wetlands are being used with great success," Mr Papale said. "The environmental benefits are also pleasing with the likelihood of fish and wildlife attracted to the wetland as well as providing an educational tool for the younger generations," Mr Papale said. Mr Cobcroft said many species of fish have lost access to an estimated 80 per cent of their original range as up to a half of the Lower Burdekin's large natural wetlands have disappeared. The remaining lagoons are under continual threat from aquatic and terrestrial weeds. NQ Dry Tropics Reef Rescue Project Manager Linda Hygate said that this is a great move forward for cane growers in the Burdekin region. "We hope that this example will encourage other growers to follow suit," Ms Hygate said.

#### ADVERTISEMENT

**Yarramine Environmental** is pleased to introduce a new service for the households of Toowoomba and surrounds. Make your home sustainable - save money, save the environment and live better. Get a **Home Sustainability Assessment** today, priced from just \$85. Our consultant will visit your home to discuss opportunities for sustainability improvements. You will receive on the spot advice, plus a written report tailored specially to your home after our visit. For more information go to <http://www.yarramineconsulting.com.au/>

## A tip / helpful hint

### Improving sustainability in the workplace

If you work in an indoor environment, draw up a list of areas that can be targeted for improvement:

- a good beginning is air-conditioning - does the set temperature allow your body to regulate itself to the prevailing climatic conditions?
- what about utilising plants in your work area ? - they help to keep the air clean.
- lighting - do you have the most efficient system of lighting and energy use that is possible?
- look at the layout of your office area - is there a better way of arranging furniture etc, to maximise the use of energy by personnel, as well as lighting, heating, or cooling ?

Aside from the actual work sites, "staff rooms" can be explored for more conscientious efforts in creating a better environment. Critically look at the energy using items there - a kettle or urn? Large fridge or small? Microwave? Drinking vessels? What about the toilet and locker room facilities - are they adequate, or in need of rethinking to today's environmentally aware demands? Even getting to and from work could be examined as an energy-efficient exercise. Could we walk, ride, bus or car pool?

*Remember, you CAN make a difference!*

Think before you print! 1 ream of paper = 6% of a tree and 5.4 kg CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere; 3 sheets of A4 paper = 1 litre of water

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