



# DIRTY POWER

BIG COAL'S NETWORK OF INFLUENCE  
OVER THE COALITION GOVERNMENT

**GREENPEACE**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The coal industry is powerful and has infiltrated Australian government at the highest levels, all the way to the office of Prime Minister, Scott Morrison. Its power and influence were key factors in the downfall of two prime ministers, Kevin Rudd and Malcolm Turnbull, and in the abolition of a range of policies driving action on climate change.**

Former coal industry staff now enjoy direct access to senior government ministers. A wide, well-funded network of lobbyists, supported by coal's political and media allies, has been key to protecting the interests of coal companies operating in Australia. Individuals at the executive and staff level of these organisations regularly trade places, reinforcing the connections within a system that keeps coal at the centre of Australian politics, stifling energy sector reform and action on climate change.

*Dirty Power* exposes that hidden network of influence.

This report is based on interviews with dozens of political staffers, executives of external lobby firms, and resources sector analysts; previously hidden details about the identity and background of federal ministers' parliamentary staff; and publicly available information about listed companies and their operatives.

While this report does not suggest any illegal or improper conduct on the part of any of the individuals or organisations named, the picture that emerges is of a government in thrall to coal: a situation that is dangerous for Australian democracy and terminal for our climate.

## KEY FINDINGS

Prime Minister Scott Morrison's senior staff is dominated by former executives and employees of the coal industry, its lobbyists, and pro-coal mastheads at News Corp. They include:

- Scott Morrison's Principal Private Secretary, Yaron Finkelstein, was the former CEO of Crosby Textor (now C|T).
- Morrison's chief of staff, John Kunkel, was previously Deputy CEO of the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) and a lobbyist for Rio Tinto.
- News Corp staffers dominate Morrison's communications team, including his speech-writer, Matthew Fynes-Clinton (formerly with *The Courier Mail*); his press secretary, Andrew Carswell (formerly chief of staff at *The Daily Telegraph*); and advisor Thomas Adolph (formerly with *The Australian*).
- Stephanie Wawn, a senior Morrison advisor, previously worked for Capital Hill Advisory, whose clients have included coal miner Glencore, as well as the pro-coal think tank the Menzies Research Centre.

Former staff of the coal industry and its peak representative body, the Minerals Council of Australia, are employed across the federal Coalition government. Prominent examples include:

- John Kunkel, Scott Morrison's chief of staff, was Deputy CEO of the MCA and a lobbyist for Rio Tinto.
- Sid Marris, former PM Malcolm Turnbull's Senior Adviser for Energy, Climate Change, Resources and Northern Australia, previously worked for the MCA as head of environment and climate policy.
- Patrick Gibbons worked as an advisor to Greg Hunt during his tenure as environment minister. When Sid Marris left the MCA to work for Malcolm Turnbull, Gibbons took up Marris' former role at the MCA.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Federal environment minister Melissa Price was a lawyer at Crosslands Resources, prior to entering politics. Crosslands is a subsidiary of Mitsubishi Development Pty Ltd, which owns several Queensland coal mines and the Hay Point coal terminal in Mackay.
- Prior to entering politics, Liberal Energy Minister Angus Taylor wrote a report for the MCA, at the height of the resources boom in 2012.<sup>1</sup> Taylor is a strong anti-wind advocate and was a headline speaker at the 'Wind Power Fraud Rally' hosted by Alan Jones and organised by anonymous anti-wind organisation StopTheseThings.com in June 2013.
- Ian Macfarlane, was federal Minister for Industry and Science (2014-15).<sup>2</sup> After leaving politics, he became chief executive of mining lobby group, the Queensland Resources Council (QRC).

Lobbying firm C|T is influential across the Coalition government and industry.

- C|T alumni include current Liberal Party campaign director, Andrew Hirst; Hirst's deputy, Isaac Levido; Yaron Finkelstein, ex-C|T CEO and current Principal Private Secretary to Scott Morrison; and James McGrath, LNP Senator for Queensland and a prominent public advocate for Adani's Carmichael coal mine.

Staff at Rupert Murdoch's News Corp have gone on to powerful positions in government and vice-versa. These include:

- Matthew Fynes-Clinton, Scott Morrison's speech-writer, was deputy chief of staff and an editor at *The Courier Mail*.
- Andrew Carswell, Morrison's press secretary, was chief of staff at *The Daily Telegraph*.
- Thomas Adolph, one of Morrison's advisors, worked at *The Australian*.
- Clive Mathieson, former editor of *The Australian*, was Malcolm Turnbull's top media advisor.

- Malcolm Cole, formerly state political editor at *The Courier Mail*, heads up communications at SAS Group, a lobbyist for Trevor St Baker's ERM Power.
- Peta Credlin, Tony Abbott's former chief of staff, now hosts a news commentary show for Sky News Australia.

This report does not seek to make any implications about the specific views of these individuals regarding coal, or any of the other issues discussed.

A number of prominent examples exist of coal interests getting their way under the Morrison government. This report highlights two.

- Trevor St Baker's Sunset Power bought the Vales Point power station from the NSW Liberal government in November 2015 for \$1m; it is now valued at \$730 million.
  - St Baker is a former Queensland government official and Queensland Resources Council director with extensive links to the National Party and the government via his own firms and his lobbyists, SAS Group.
  - SAS Group lobbied Environment Minister Melissa Price on behalf of Sunset Power to allow Vales Point to bid into the federal Emissions Reduction Fund to fund an equipment upgrade; Price later requested a review of how coal fired power stations could earn carbon credits under the Emissions Reduction Fund.
  - In 2019 Vales Point was shortlisted by Scott Morrison for government financial assistance under the Underwriting New Generation Investments scheme, against explicit advice from Treasury.
- Adani's groundwater plan approval was granted by Environment Minister, Melissa Price, in April 2019, the day before the 2019 election was called, despite CSIRO misgivings. This decision came after substantial pressure on Price from figures within the government who previously worked on behalf of the coal industry and its lobbyists, including Matt Canavan and James McGrath. Price herself previously worked for a subsidiary of Mitsubishi Development, an owner of several operating Queensland coal mines.



## INTRODUCTION

**This report analyses the extent to which the coal industry is embedded in Australian federal politics. It demonstrates how coal's pivotal position in key networks of influence has enabled its interests to remain central to the agenda of the current federal government. The Dirty Power network that this report outlines is comprised of four components, each characterised by coal industry connections.**

The industry component of the network includes the coal companies themselves and their peak industry groups, such as the Minerals Council of Australia.

The lobbyist component includes firms employed by the coal industry and its supporters to advance its agenda but which are outside the sector, such as C|T (previously Crosby Textor) and the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA).

The media component of the network includes newspapers and media organisations which regularly take a pro-coal editorial stance and whose staff have gone on to work in one of the other parts of the network.

Finally, the political component of the network is centred on federal MPs, senators, and their parliamentary staff.

This report begins by providing a brief outline of each of the components of the network and the extent of their power and influence in Australia. It then analyses the coal connections of prominent federal Coalition ministers and members of parliament, including their parliamentary staffers, and how they are connected to the other parts of the network. It concludes with two case studies of specific government decisions that demonstrate the Dirty Power network in action.

# BIG COAL

**The influencing of politicians, bureaucrats and the course of government policy is a billion-dollar business, subsidised by taxpayers through tax exemptions. An analysis of the financial statements of 20 of Australia's major business lobbies found almost \$2 billion in funding by corporations over the past three years.<sup>3</sup>**

There is no lobby group in the country which conducts its business as forcefully as the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA), the peak body which represents the interests of large coal companies.<sup>4</sup>

Flush with funding thanks to the contributions of its multinational mining company members such as BHP, Rio Tinto and Swiss-owned coal giant Glencore, the miners' peak body can raise a campaign war chest at a moment's notice. In 2010, the MCA helped to oust a sitting prime minister, Kevin Rudd, from office with a \$22 million advertising blitz against the mining tax.<sup>5</sup> A 2017 investigation of the financial statements of the MCA showed this not-for-profit association has booked revenues of more than \$200 million over the past 11 years. Revenues peaked at \$35 million, \$32 million and \$37 million in 2010, 2011 and 2012 when the group was busy fighting the mining tax, the carbon tax and the Renewable Energy Target.

This is but a fraction of the story, however. Research by *CoalWire* editor Bob Burton, who has been studying the minerals lobby for more than a decade, found the funding of the MCA's state satellites and the oil & gas peak body, the Australian Coal Association (ACA), NSW Minerals Council, Queensland Resources Council (QRC) and Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association (APPEA), amounted to a towering \$541 million over the past 11 years. That's \$37 million for the Australian Coal Association (which was wrapped into the MCA in 2013), \$77 million for the NSW Minerals Council, \$203.6 million for the MCA itself, \$139 million for APPEA and \$85 million for the QRC.<sup>6</sup>



The MCA's 2017 annual report shows that the lobby group spent \$14.7 million that year.<sup>7</sup> The 13 directors of the MCA include the chief executives of Glencore, Whitehaven, Anglo American, and Peabody Energy Australia, as well as BHP and Rio Tinto executives. Coal-dependent mining services company, CIMIC, is also on the board.

# THE LOBBYISTS

**Besides the peak industry bodies, large corporations typically have in-house government lobbying expertise; they also use external agencies such as C|T Group, previously known as Crosby Textor. Others include communications group Newgate, GRA Cosway, Capital Hill Advisory, Next Level Strategic Services, SAS Group, and Barton Deakin.**

## C|T

No firm has been so firmly entrenched in power during the last six years of Coalition government as C|T: the lobbying firm previously known as Crosby Textor, founded by Sir Lynton Crosby and Liberal Party pollster Mark Textor.<sup>8</sup>

A story by reporter Aaron Patrick in the *Australian Financial Review* describes the intimacy of the relationship between C|T and the Liberal Party.<sup>9</sup>

*"[Andrew] Hirst is the Liberal Party's campaign director. He reports to the federal executive of the Liberal Party and works directly with Morrison on campaign strategy. [Yaron] Finkelstein is Morrison's principal private secretary, which makes him the Prime Minister's primary political adviser.*

*"He is responsible for day-to-day liaison with [Catherine] Douglas, who runs the Australian campaign operation at C|T Group, the Coalition pollster founded by Crosby and Textor 17 years ago.*

*"Hirst and Finkelstein speak on an almost daily basis, according to people who know them. They share a common professional and political history with Douglas."*

Yaron Finkelstein worked at C|T for 12 years, eventually being appointed as CEO. He joined Scott Morrison's office in September 2018. Andrew Hirst was at C|T before becoming Liberal Party federal director in 2017. Hirst's deputy, Isaac Levido, also worked at C|T. The relationship between Hirst, Douglas, Finkelstein and Morrison is close and centres around campaign strategy for the Prime Minister's office, including war-gaming the approach of the government, public opinion polling, and marginal seat data work. "People familiar with the process say it is exhaustive. Although C|T doesn't write Coalition policy, sources say its research is so influential that the firm's feedback will inevitably shape the government's message."<sup>10</sup>

In early 2017, C|T was employed by coal giant Glencore to promote coal and undermine its detractors via an operation code-named 'Project Caesar'. The project included a social media campaign that used misleading information to promote coal and undermine renewables.

According to *The Guardian*, which broke the story:

*"The C|T Group used teams in Sydney and London to further Glencore's interests across the globe, including in Australia, according to multiple sources with knowledge of the project and documents seen by Guardian Australia.*

*Project Caesar began in early 2017 with an annual warchest of between £4 million and £7 million.*

*Glencore has confirmed the project's existence but said it moved to shut it down last month to "ensure alignment" with its recent decision to limit coal production for environmental reasons."<sup>11</sup>*

Glencore's coal assets in Australia have included the Bulga Coal Mine (NSW), Liddell Coal Mine (NSW), Mt Owen Coal Mine (NSW), Ravensworth Coal Mine (NSW), Mangoola Coal Mine (NSW), Newlands Coal Mine (QLD), Collinsville Coal Mine (QLD), Oaky Creek Coal Mine (QLD), Clermont Coal Mine (QLD) and Rolleston Coal Mine (QLD) and numerous port facilities.<sup>12</sup>



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## THE LOBBYISTS

According to the NSW Government Register of Third Party Lobbyists, Crosby Textor has also declared lobbying for Mitsubishi Australia Limited, whose subsidiary, Mitsubishi Development Pty Ltd, has an extensive portfolio of coal mines in Australia<sup>13</sup>; the powerful oil and gas peak body, the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association (APPEA), in Queensland, NSW and WA; and also conducts research for the Queensland Resources Council.<sup>14</sup>

C|T has also been involved in various conservative election campaigns, including those of Tony Abbott (2013); former Queensland LNP Premier, Campbell Newman; John Key (NZ); David Cameron, and Theresa May (UK).

As outlined below in the sections of this report relating to specific MPs, senior figures at C|T have gone on to take up influential positions with senior ministers, including the office of Prime Minister Scott Morrison, and in the Liberal Party.

## THE INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The IPA is a conservative public policy think tank that regularly promotes coal and climate scepticism. The IPA receives substantial funding from mining magnate Gina Rinehart's company Hancock Prospecting.<sup>15</sup> Hancock Prospecting donated \$2.3 million in 2016 and \$2.2 million in 2017.<sup>16</sup> Past donors have included the Liberal Party's Cormack Foundation and a number of fossil fuel corporations, including Exxon and Shell.

The IPA's 70th anniversary celebration was attended by Gina Rinehart (a lifetime member), Tony Abbott and Rupert Murdoch.<sup>17</sup> News Corp opinion writer for *The Australian* newspaper, Janet Albrechtsen, is an IPA board member.<sup>18</sup> James Bolt (son of conservative political commentator Andrew Bolt) is an IPA staff member.<sup>19</sup>

## THE MONASH FORUM

The pro-coal Monash Forum is a recent player on the political landscape. It advocates for coal, with members promoting government support for new coal fired power stations in Australia.<sup>20</sup> Members reportedly include Tony Abbott, Eric Abetz, Barnaby Joyce and eleven of his National Party colleagues<sup>21</sup>, Craig Kelly and Kevin Andrews.<sup>22</sup> The Monash Forum and its members were central to the internal campaign against the Turnbull government's signature energy policy, the National Energy Guarantee, in late 2018.

## MEDIA NETWORKS

**The role of the media in promoting the interests of the coal lobby has been significant. Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation controls close to 60 percent of the nation's newspapers including the national daily broadsheet, *The Australian*, and the state tabloids *The Daily Telegraph*, *Herald Sun* and the monopoly mastheads in Queensland and South Australia, *The Courier Mail* and the *Adelaide Advertiser*.<sup>23</sup>**

These are the only major media assets in Australia which regularly run climate sceptic stories and promote new coal-fired power generation and new thermal coal mines. Murdoch also owns the pay-TV monopoly Sky News, whose talk show hosts, such as Peta Credlin and Paul Murray, are aggressive advocates for coal.

The other loud media voice for the coal lobby is Sydney's leading talkback radio network 2GB which is controlled by John Singleton via his 32 percent stake in Macquarie Media.<sup>24</sup>

### NEWS CORP

News Corp retains a strong influence over Coalition policy. Before Scott Morrison became PM, the News Corp presence in the Prime Minister's Office was already established. Clive Mathieson, a former editor of *The Australian*, was Malcolm Turnbull's top media adviser. Tony Abbott's intimate links with News Corp are well established. Lachlan Murdoch is also reportedly close to Tony Abbott and his former chief of staff Peta Credlin.<sup>25</sup>

Matthew Fynes-Clinton, now Scott Morrison's speechwriter, was previously deputy chief of staff and an editor at *The Courier Mail*.<sup>26</sup> Andrew Carswell, Scott Morrison's Press Secretary, who moved across from the Treasurer's office when Morrison became PM, was formerly a journalist and chief of staff at News Corp's *The Daily Telegraph*. Thomas Adolph, now also working in Scott Morrison's office, was formerly with *The Australian*.

Malcolm Cole, now at SAS Group, lobbyist for St Baker's ERM Power (discussed in further detail below), was the state political editor at *The Courier Mail*.<sup>27</sup>



News Corp owns a 65 per cent stake in the Foxtel pay TV network whose 24 hour news channel Sky News Australia therefore also sits within the media empire of Rupert Murdoch. Sky News' talk show programming regularly promotes pro-coal and climate skeptic editorial content, including support for building new coal-fired power plants and opening up new exploration areas for thermal coal such as Adani's Carmichael Project in the Galilee Basin.

Sky hosts Peta Credlin, Paul Murray, Andrew Bolt, Chris Kenny and others are strong advocates for the hard right of the Coalition government and interview Monash Forum members such as pro-coal Liberal MPs Craig Kelly, Matt Canavan and Angus Taylor, and National Party MPs Keith Pitt and Barnaby Joyce. Trevor St Baker has also been a guest on Sky News.

While noting that many individuals named in this report previously worked at News Corp publications, we do not make any implications regarding the views of those individuals with regards to coal or any of the other issues discussed in this report.

### 2GB'S COAL CONNECTIONS

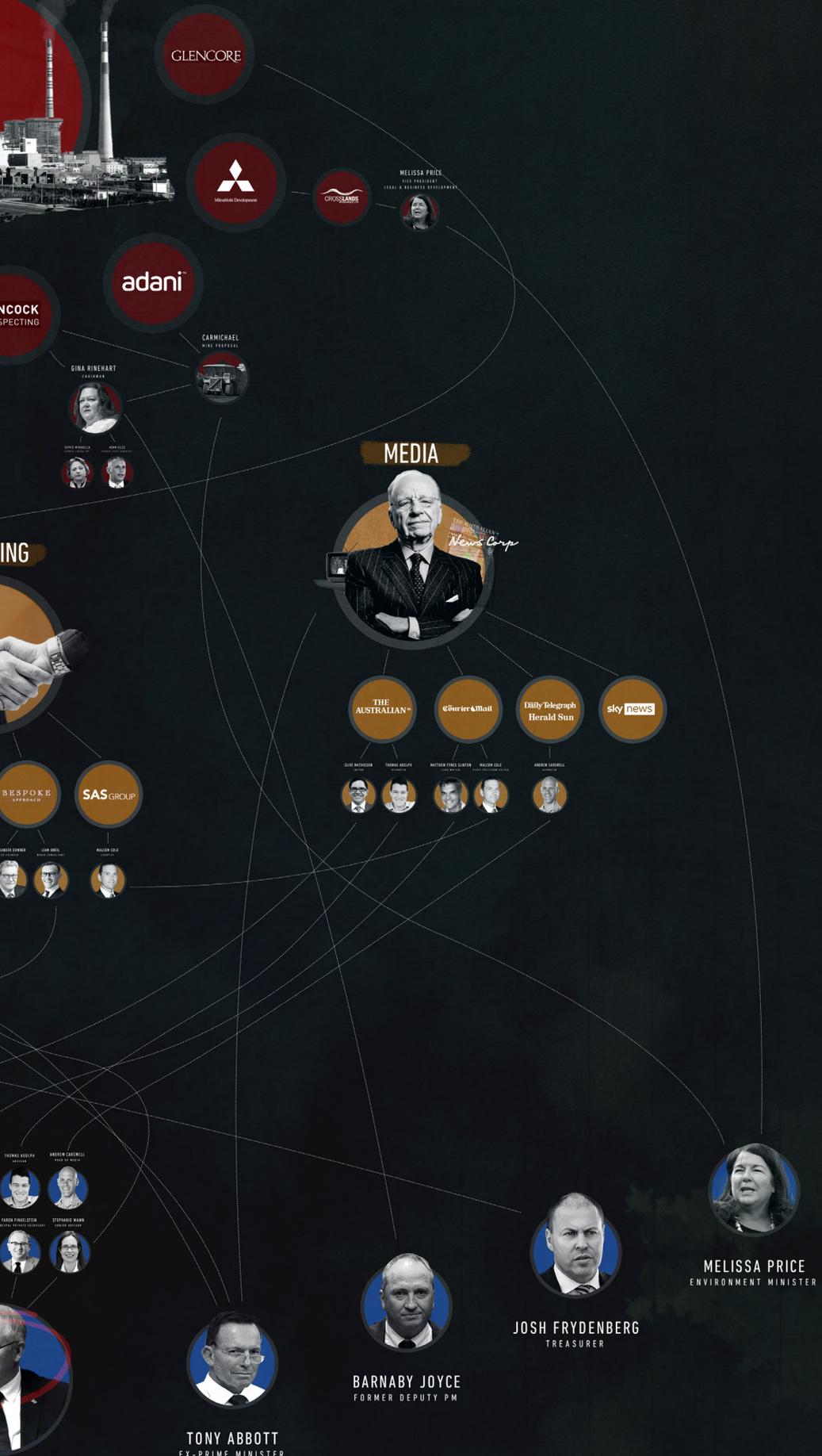
Besides his controlling interest in radio station 2GB, John Singleton is a major shareholder in TerraCom and Bonython Coal. Bloomberg shows Singleton's Bonython Coal with 55.9 million shares in TerraCom, or 14.09 per cent of the issued capital.<sup>28</sup>

Singleton's friend Wal King, formerly the head of mining contractor Leighton Holdings, is a director and shareholder in junior coal miner TerraCom, which bought Rio's Blair Athol mine in Queensland for \$1 in 2016, four years after it had closed.

The company has interests in the Bowen Basin and Singleton's Bonython Coal last year underwrote TerraCom's \$15 million capital raising. Further, King and Singleton also have interests in the Galilee Basin and therefore a personal interest in seeing Adani's rail project succeed as it would open up the Galilee for other coal miners.<sup>29</sup> The TerraCom portfolio controls the Hughenden tenements which sit to the north of the Galilee.

# THE DIRTY POWER NETWORK





# POLITICS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



## SCOTT MORRISON AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

According to documents obtained by Greenpeace, the Prime Minister has at least 31 people working in his office. An analysis of these individuals' background and employment history, together with data obtained from investigating the staff of Prime Minister Scott Morrison's predecessors Malcolm Turnbull and Tony Abbott, reveals two clear trends: coal lobby connections and links to the News Corp Australia press, controlled by US media baron Rupert Murdoch.

John Kunkel and Yaron Finkelstein are Scott Morrison's most powerful advisors. Kunkel is Morrison's Chief of Staff and Finkelstein his Principal Private Secretary. John Kunkel was previously Deputy CEO of the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) and a lobbyist for Rio Tinto. Finkelstein, is a former CEO of C|T.

At least three former News Corp journalists now work in the PM's office: Matthew Fynes-Clinton, formerly deputy chief of staff and an editor at *The Courier Mail* newspaper, Thomas Adolph, also formerly with *The Australian*, and Morrison's Press Secretary Andrew Carswell. Carswell, who moved across from the Treasurer's office when Morrison became PM, was formerly a journalist for over ten years and chief of staff with News Corp's *The Daily Telegraph*. The Murdoch press is well known for its critical coverage of climate change and renewable energy. It is also known for promoting fossil fuels in its newspapers such as *The Australian*, the *Herald Sun*, *The Daily Telegraph*, its other state tabloids, and via Foxtel's Sky News.

Another senior advisor to the Prime Minister is Stephanie Wawn. Wawn formerly worked for former Liberal state minister Michael Photios' lobby group, Capital Hill Advisory. Capital Hill counted Xstrata plc, which merged with coal giant Glencore, as one of its clients.<sup>30</sup> She also worked for Tony Abbott and had a brief stint with the pro-coal think tank, Menzies Research Centre.<sup>31</sup>

Morrison's appointment of Yaron Finkelstein to the role of Principal Private Secretary in September 2018 continued a tradition of revolving doors between C|T and the office of the Prime Minister. Senator James McGrath, who had also been working with C|T, was placed in the role of Assistant Minister to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull from September 2015 to August 2018, a role which had formerly been occupied by the Treasurer Josh Frydenberg.

Finkelstein also works closely with Andrew Hirst, the current Federal Director of the Liberal Party of Australia, who is also a former director of C|T Group, as discussed in this report above. Hirst has worked for four leaders of the Liberal Party of Australia: John Howard, Brendan Nelson, Malcolm Turnbull, and as Deputy Chief of Staff to Tony Abbott, where he worked alongside another proponent of coal, Peta Credlin.<sup>32</sup>

The coal connection extends back beyond Scott Morrison. When Malcolm Turnbull came to office, he appointed Sid Marris straight from the Minerals Council as Senior Adviser for Energy, Climate Change, Resources and Northern Australia. Replacing him as head of environment and climate policy at the Minerals Council was Patrick Gibbons, who had been an adviser to former Environment Minister Greg Hunt. Marris returned to the Minerals Council in December 2018 after Turnbull's exit from the Prime Ministership.

## POLITICS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

### BARNABY JOYCE AND THE QUEENSLAND CONNECTION

Former Deputy Prime Minister and National Party leader Barnaby Joyce has been an enthusiastic promoter of coal for many years. He's also a member of the Monash Forum, along with George Christensen, Tony Abbott, Craig Kelly and Eric Abetz.<sup>33</sup>

Joyce is a regular guest on Sky News chat shows at night time along with fellow political coal boosters such as MPs Craig Kelly, Keith Pitt and Matthew Canavan. Sky is controlled by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation and is a tireless promoter of Adani's Carmichael Project and public subsidies for new coal generation. In May 2016, Joyce was starting "to wonder whether climate change might really be happening". By June 2017, Joyce was donning a white lab coat in a carbon capture plant in London: the Australian High Commission tweeted the visit.<sup>34</sup> Recently, Joyce has called for the government to subsidise a new coal-fired power station.

Joyce has received funding from, and is known to be close to, resources billionaire Gina Rinehart. Rinehart handed Barnaby Joyce a \$40,000 donation cheque at an event in November 2017; the ABC reported, "other guests included federal Nationals senator Bridget McKenzie, and MP George Christiansen. Former Liberal MP Sophie Mirabella and former Northern Territory Chief Minister Adam Giles, who are now staffers for Mrs Rinehart, were also at the event."<sup>35</sup> Joyce was also one of three MPs that Rinehart flew to India as guests at the wedding of her granddaughter and business partner.<sup>36</sup>

Rinehart's GVK Hancock joint venture in the Galilee Basin is a commercial ally for the controversial Adani thermal coal project, Carmichael. If Adani is successful in opening up the Galilee Basin with rail access, then Rinehart and other coal miners will benefit by sharing the transport infrastructure to freight coal to Adani's Abbot Point terminal on the coast.

Gina Hancock is well connected to the LNP via her own relationships and those of her staff and lobbyists. Hancock lobbyist Josh Euler's firm, Resolution PR, has been identified for making donations to the LNP and \$3,000 to Katter's Australian Party two days before the Queensland election. Euler was general manager external affairs at GVK Hancock from April 2013 to September 2015, and is currently a listed lobbyist<sup>37</sup> and managing director of lobbying firm Resolution PR.<sup>38</sup> Euler also gave 'project



updates' to Queensland Opposition MP (now Opposition Leader) Deb Frecklington, former Opposition Environment spokesman Christian Rowan, and crossbencher Robbie Katter at three separate fundraisers in mid-2019.

Another beneficiary of opening up the Galilee Basin is less well known but very well connected and motivated behind the scenes: mining company Comet Ridge. Former LNP treasurer Stuart Fraser sits on the Catholic Foundation Board with Comet Ridge's non executive chairman James McKay. Catherine Tanna, now managing director of Energy Australia, which controls substantial coal assets, was previously on the Catholic Foundation Board in 2013.

In 2016 a company (Initiative Capital) run by prominent LNP member John Cotter Jr was part of a consortium with Bowen Collinsville Enterprise (BCE) that received \$3 million in federal funding for a feasibility study for Urannah Dam in northern Queensland. The money came from the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund, and the project was selected for funding by the then Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce, although the Urannah Dam was not listed as a state priority.<sup>39</sup> According to a local newspaper at the time, the project had "potential to cement the future of Bowen and Galilee basin mines by offering water security for years to come".<sup>40</sup>

Cotter Jr was a member of the LNP's state executive and a regional party chair at the time, and his partner in Initiative Capital, Gerard Paynter, was the Queensland managing director of LNP-aligned lobbying firm Barton Deakin.<sup>41</sup> According to BCE's website "future coal development in the Bowen Basin is constrained by lack of water supply". BCE's 2018 chairman's report states the Urannah Dam's "elevated strategic location provides most cost efficient option for water delivery to all areas of Northern Bowen Basin Coalfields".<sup>42</sup>

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## POLITICS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



### ANGUS TAYLOR

Liberal Energy Minister Angus Taylor is a prominent critic of wind energy and has undertaken work for the fossil fuel lobby.

Angus Taylor was involved in producing research for the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) during his tenure at the consulting firm Port Jackson Partners. At the height of the resources boom in 2012, Taylor wrote a report for the MCA cautioning that costs were too high and calling for cuts to labour costs.<sup>43</sup> Taylor was also a member of the Victorian government taskforce to investigate the development of a coal seam gas industry in the state. Reporting in November 2013, the taskforce recommended that the State of Victoria should promote the production of additional and largely onshore gas supply.

Taylor was a speaker at the “Wind Power Fraud Rally” organised by the anonymous anti-wind and pro-coal blog StopTheseThings.com and hosted by Alan Jones on 18 June 2013 in Canberra. StopTheseThings.com’s opposition to wind farms is based in part on debunked claims about their health impacts, including that they caused brain damage in humans. Taylor’s wife, Sydney barrister Louise Clegg, was quoted in the *Australian Financial Review* arguing that rolling blackouts might be needed to teach people that “left populism (was) not the answer” to Australia’s policy challenges.<sup>44</sup>

One of the major clients of Angus Taylor’s \$400 million agricultural investment fund, Growth Farms Australia, is the UK hedge fund boss Michael Hintze who was identified as one of the anonymous funders of Nigel Lawson’s climate skeptic think-tank the Global Warming Policy Foundation.<sup>45</sup>

Angus Taylor’s sister, Bronnie Taylor, was elected to NSW Parliament in 2015 and became parliamentary secretary to the deputy premier, John Barilaro, in 2017 and has been

parliamentary secretary for southern NSW since 2016.<sup>46</sup> Barilaro, the NSW Nationals Leader and Monaro MP, has been a long time proponent of “clean coal” generation and was a vocal supporter of a government led takeover of the Liddell coal-fired power station if its owner AGL would not extend its life. His views have since changed and he claims to no longer support new coal generation.

Energy Minister Angus Taylor has at least 24 staff in his office. These include Liam O’Neil who previously worked for the corporate lobby group Bespoke Approach. Bespoke Approach was established in 2008 by Alexander Downer, Andrew Butcher, Nick Bolkus, and lobbyist Ian Smith, and has worked for a number of resources companies, including Xstrata (which merged with Glencore in 2013), Woodside Energy and Petrochina.



### MELISSA PRICE

The Environment Minister Melissa Price was formerly a lawyer with Crosslands Resources, a subsidiary of coal giant Mitsubishi Development.<sup>47</sup>

Mitsubishi Development Pty Ltd is the holding company of Mitsubishi Corporation’s coal assets in Australia. Mitsubishi Development Ltd owns numerous Queensland coal mines, including Blackwater, Gregory Crinum, Goonyella Riverside, Norwich Park, Peak Downs, Saraji, Daunia, Caval Ridge and Broadmeadow. The company also owns the Hay point coal terminal in Mackay, and has significant shareholdings in the Clermont Coal Mine.<sup>48</sup> In 2009, Crosslands Resources was a foundation member of a Western Australian iron ore lobby group seeking concessions under an emissions trading scheme (ETS).<sup>49</sup>

As discussed in more detail in Case Study 2, below, on 8 April, 2019, Melissa Price gave approval to Adani for a Groundwater Management Plan for its much-delayed Carmichael coal mine in Queensland’s Galilee Basin, the final federal approvals hurdle for the mine.<sup>50</sup>

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## POLITICS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



### JOSH FRYDENBERG

Josh Frydenberg was appointed Minister for the Environment and Energy on 19 July 2016.

In January 2017, Frydenberg approved the controversial expansion of the New Acland coal mine.<sup>51</sup> In April 2018, as Minister Josh Frydenberg was responsible for the handover of \$444 million in public funds to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation (GBRF). The grant was made without a competitive tender process or application: Frydenberg and then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull offered the money in a meeting with the foundation's chair, John Schubert. Schubert had been a long-serving executive of Esso in Australia, owned by US oil major Exxon.<sup>52</sup> Stephen Fitzgerald, previously chairman of Goldman Sachs Australia and New Zealand, is on the board of the GBRF. Malcolm Turnbull is a former managing director of Goldman Sachs Australia.<sup>53</sup>

It was also during Frydenberg's tenure as environment minister that the Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund was considering a \$900 million loan to Adani to open up the Galilee Basin and subsidise Adani's proposed Carmichael coal mine. The government's position was to back Carmichael, then planned to be the largest new thermal coal mine in the world.

Adani began using the lobbying services of Next Level Strategic Services in February 2015.<sup>54</sup> Former Liberal staffer David Moore was a key Adani lobbyist, having worked with Bill Shorten's former chief of staff and former Queensland Labor state secretary, Cameron Milner, at lobbying firms Milner Strategic Services & Next Level Strategic Services.<sup>55</sup> Moore had previously worked for almost 10 years as a senior media advisor and chief of staff in the Howard government. Moore was chief of staff to Campbell Newman's election team and was "instrumental in coordinating the Leader's office up to the LNP 2012 victory" in Queensland.<sup>56</sup>



### MATT CANAVAN

Matthew Canavan is the Minister for Resources and Northern Australia, and is widely regarded as the most vocal advocate for both Adani's Carmichael Project and for government subsidies to build new coal-fired power plants.

As Minister for Northern Australia, Canavan is responsible for the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF), a \$5 billion fund to subsidise infrastructure in the north. Research has found the board is stacked with coal and mining connections.<sup>57</sup>

Matthew Canavan's brother, John Canavan, was an executive at Peabody Energy from January 2011, occupying the role of senior business manager and then director of mergers and acquisitions. In June 2018 it was reported that John Canavan had set up a new entity with another former Peabody executive to bid for the Rolleston Coal Mine, then owned by Glencore; John Canavan now owns a 7 per cent interest in the mine.<sup>58</sup> The Federal Government register of pecuniary interests shows Matthew Canavan had borrowed money from his brother. The amount of the loan is not specified.

In 2018, Matthew Canavan and Barnaby Joyce recorded a video at Parliament House regarding government funding of the construction of Rockwood Weir in the Fitzroy Basin catchment. Peabody Energy proposed several coal mines in the catchment at that time, including Olive Downs North, Curragh South, Moorvale West, and Willunga. In the video Matthew Canavan claimed the federal LNP government had waited more than 600 days for the Queensland Labor government to fund the other half of the project. Queensland government-owned corporation SunWater had prepared the draft Environmental Impact Statement, required for the project's approval, for the lower Fitzroy River infrastructure project.<sup>59</sup>

## POLITICS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

There is a possible connection between Nicole Hollows<sup>60</sup> (who became chief executive of SunWater in 2016 after her role as managing director of AMCI Australia, and was chief executive of Macarthur Coal until Oct 2011 - assisting in the Peabody takeover of Macarthur Coal before departing), John Canavan (mergers and acquisitions manager at Peabody, brother of National Party MP Matt Canavan), and National Party president Larry Anthony (non-executive director of Sunwater Dec 2013-Oct 2015)<sup>61</sup>. According to her LinkedIn account, Nicole Hollows is currently both chief executive officer of SunWater Limited and non-executive director of Downer EDI Limited, a mine contracting firm.<sup>62</sup>

The South Galilee Coal Project, an open-cut and underground thermal coal-mining operation in the Galilee Basin, received state and Commonwealth environmental approvals during the period Hollows was managing director of AMCI Australia. AMCI (Alpha) Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of the AMCI Group, is the proponent of the South Galilee Coal Project.<sup>63</sup>

SunWater is represented by Brisbane legal firm McCullough Robertson Lawyers. The law firm also represent Adani and the Queensland Government. A website with material regarding water privatisation in Queensland, allegedly drafted by the law firm, has since been removed.<sup>64</sup> In 2016 the website stated:

*"Galilee Water Pty Ltd is planning to build deep, off-stream water storages from Cape River and the Campaspe River, to supply coal mines spreading 330km from the Macmines project in the north to one proposed near Alpha. It is said that these mines will be supplied via underground pipelines under take or pay contracts. Galilee Water Pty Ltd will be operating in the same sector as SunWater, at those operations."*

The head of Galilee Water Pty Ltd is an ex Queensland Labor treasurer, Keith de Lacy. According to the Mackay Conservation Group, Galilee Water Pty Ltd was planning to take water "through two initial diversions from the Cape and Campaspe Rivers in the upper reaches of the Burdekin River and store it for water supply to the Galilee Basin. Galilee Water is a dollar company headed by Keith de Lacy the instigator of Cubbie Station which proposes to take up to 214,000ML/year. That is 38 percent of the volume of Sydney Harbour."<sup>65</sup>

Canavan, as a National Party senator, is connected with Mark Vaile, chairman of Whitehaven Coal, previously federal Nationals leader and Deputy Prime Minister. Canavan is among a group of hardline National Party members who are pushing for new coal-fired power plants despite the overwhelming evidence that renewable energy is now cheaper to build than new coal.<sup>66</sup>



### GREG HUNT

Greg Hunt was Environment Minister in the Abbott/Turnbull government from 18 September 2013 until 19 July 2016. When Malcolm Turnbull became Prime Minister, he appointed Sid Marris straight from the Minerals Council as one of his key advisers: Senior Adviser Energy, Climate Change, Resources and Northern Australia. Replacing him as head of environment and climate policy at the Minerals Council was Patrick Gibbons who had previously been an adviser to Hunt.

## POLITICS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

### BARRY O'SULLIVAN

National Party Senator Barry O'Sullivan was treasurer of the Queensland LNP from 2009-2013. He had previously held the role of chair of the Rockhampton Branch in central Queensland, and was chair and campaign director of the Rockhampton state electorate. O'Sullivan replaced Barnaby Joyce in the Queensland Senate on 11 February 2014, after being cleared by Queensland's crime and misconduct commission.<sup>67</sup>

In 1991, O'Sullivan established Jilbridge Pty Ltd, a development and civil construction business based in Toowoomba, QLD.<sup>68</sup> In September 2008, a few weeks after registering the merger of the Liberal and National parties in Queensland, Barry O'Sullivan founded Newlands Civil Construction Pty Ltd. The merged LNP facilitated the entry of unconventional gas to Queensland.<sup>69</sup>

O'Sullivan resigned as director of Newlands in 2012 prior to his Senate nomination, but retained a stake through Jilbridge (his commercial building and investment firm) and passed Newlands to his son, Barry O'Sullivan Jr.<sup>70</sup> Senator O'Sullivan's register of interests lists himself as beneficiary of various family trusts, including The O'Sullivan Investment Trust, and lists Barry Colin O'Sullivan (Jnr) as beneficiary of the Annie O'Sullivan Family Trust. Senator O'Sullivan also nominates shareholdings in Jilbridge Pty Ltd, New Lands Group Pty Ltd, Newlands Civil Construction Pty Ltd, New Lands Group Holdings Pty Ltd and O'Sullivan & Sons Pty Ltd.<sup>71</sup>

Newlands' contracts include Origin Energy's Australian Pacific LNG (APLNG) coal seam gas project. The company has obtained pre-qualifications for Queensland Gas Company (QGC), Arrow Energy, Queensland government and Northern Territory government work.<sup>72</sup> O'Sullivan's company laid the foundations for CSG-LNG entry across regional Queensland, including the main entrance to Wagners' Wellcamp Airport.<sup>73</sup> In August 2017 it was reported that Senator O'Sullivan's family business (Newlands Group) had been awarded \$25 million for a Queensland infrastructure project that was 80% funded by the Commonwealth government.<sup>74</sup>



### JAMES MCGRATH

Queensland LNP senator James McGrath performed various roles for the UK Conservative Party from 2002-08. McGrath worked as a political operative for conservative campaign managers Crosby Textor (now C|T). C|T has lobbied on behalf of Japan's Mitsubishi Corporation, which controls extensive coal assets in Australia, the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association (APPEA) in Queensland, and has worked for the Queensland Resources Council.<sup>75</sup>

C|T has also managed campaigns for the UK Conservatives and the Australian Liberal Party. Lynton Crosby was a key political strategist in UK Prime Minister David Cameron's inner circle. Textor was a key figure inside the office of Tony Abbott when he was the Parliamentary leader of the federal Liberal Party.<sup>76</sup>

McGrath was elected as a Queensland Liberal senator in 2013. Senator McGrath's August 2014 Statement of Registrable Interests reveals he was contracted to Santos GLNG<sup>77</sup> and KPMG in the period September 2013 to 30 June 2014, that is, after election to the Senate but before his maiden speech - in which he claimed to wear the shoes of Santo Santoro and thanked National Party Senator Matthew Canavan, once a Liberal, for his friendship. McGrath<sup>78</sup> served as minister assisting PM Malcolm Turnbull from September 2015 to August 2018 but switched allegiances to the camp of hardline leadership contender, Peter Dutton, in the leadership spill.

As discussed in Case Study 2, below, in April 2019 McGrath threatened to call for the federal environment minister, Melissa Price, to be sacked if she did not sign off on the final Commonwealth approval for the Adani project.<sup>79</sup> Minister Price subsequently gave approval to Adani's groundwater-related management plan on 8 April 2019.<sup>80</sup> According to the CSIRO and Geosciences Australia, Adani's groundwater modelling was "not suitable".<sup>81</sup>

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## POLITICS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



### IAN MACFARLANE

Former Queensland Liberal MP Ian Macfarlane held the Industry and Resources portfolio from 26 November 2001 until 3 December 2007, and was later Minister for Industry and Science, with responsibility for the CSIRO, between 18 September 2013 and 21 September 2015. An attempt by Macfarlane to defect to The Nationals in 2015 was rejected by the LNP state executive due to concerns over the stability of the federal coalition.<sup>82</sup>

After leaving politics, Macfarlane became CEO of mining lobby the Queensland Resources Council (QRC), a position he continues to hold.<sup>83</sup> Macfarlane's predecessor at QRC, Michael Roche<sup>84</sup>, has been working as a strategic advisor at McCullough Robertson Lawyers since February 2017. McCullough Robertson, now Queensland's largest law firm, represents ERM Power Limited, Adani, Peabody Energy and the Queensland Government.<sup>85</sup> McCullough Robertson lawyer Trent Thorne heads the Rural Press Club of Queensland.

### GEORGE CHRISTENSEN

Queensland Nationals MP, George Christensen, is a strident proponent of coal mining and has regularly advocated for Adani's Carmichael project. According to the pecuniary interests register, he was flown to Japan in 2018 by coal lobby group COAL21.

The fund includes 26 investors from among Australia's black coal producers. COAL21 says it primarily invests in the development of low-emissions technologies for the coal-fired power generation sector and in emissions reduction from coal mines, though other industries that use coal are also considered for investment.<sup>86</sup>

In March 2019, George Christensen was revealed to have used Crosby Textor's 'Project Caesar' material to promote the coal industry.<sup>87</sup>

# CASE STUDY 1: TREVOR ST BAKER AND THE VALES POINT POWER STATION

Trevor St Baker is a former Queensland Government official and director of the Queensland Resources Council, a former National Party candidate, and current director of the Energy Policy Institute of Australia.<sup>88</sup> As a Queensland public servant, St Baker was at the forefront of the deregulation of the Queensland electricity sector.

In November 2015, the NSW Liberal government sold the Vales Point coal-fired power station for \$1 million to St Baker's Sunset Power International.<sup>89</sup> Sunset Power, trading as Delta Energy, now estimates that Vales Point is worth \$730 million. As reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, "[Sunset Power] said the rapid increase in wholesale prices had been a major component in the current valuation. It added that there are a number of projects running into tens of millions of dollars that have lifted the operational capabilities of the plant, with the potential of Delta Electricity to spend around \$200 million for maintenance and upgrading."<sup>90</sup>

Sunset/Delta's plan to refurbish Vales Point to enable it to run to 2049 has made the federal government's 2019 shortlist of projects to receive public support via its Underwriting New Generation Investments program. Vales Point is the only coal fired power plant to make the shortlist. Freedom of Information documents released in May 2019 revealed that Scott Morrison ignored advice from Treasury advising against "providing or hinting at providing any assistance to Delta" for Vales Point and included the power plant on the shortlist; St Baker's company, ERM Power, also purchases power from Vales Point and has contracts to supply the NSW Government with electricity.<sup>91</sup> While there is no evidence of wrongdoing on St Baker's part, the substantial difference in the valuation of Vales Point demands closer examination.

St Baker is well-connected in politics and business. He is a regular donor to the Liberal Party both personally and via his companies.<sup>92</sup> St Baker's links in Queensland include Tony Bellas, a former Queensland Treasury deputy under-treasurer who also was involved in the establishment of government owned energy corporations. In 2009, Bellas,

became director of ERM Power and was involved in its ASX float; his directorship ended on 28 February, 2019.<sup>93</sup> ERM Power was the largest shareholder in Metgasco,<sup>94</sup> the gas company that accepted \$25 million from the NSW Coalition government in 2015 as settlement for cancellation of its Northern Rivers gas tenement,<sup>95</sup> following a sustained community protest at Bentley. ERM Power has since sold its holdings in Metgasco.

The status and connections of St Baker and his companies have been fortified through their lobbying activities. ERM Power uses firm SAS Group to lobby government. The government relations unit at SAS is led by Lisa Palu, a former state secretary of The Nationals.<sup>96</sup> Director of communications at SAS Group, Malcolm Cole,<sup>97</sup> advised Howard's Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer for a brief period in 2007,<sup>98</sup> after a lengthy career at *The Courier Mail*. Cole worked together at *The Courier Mail* with Matthew Fynes-Clinton, now one of Scott Morrison's senior advisors.

In April 2019, *The Guardian* reported that John Short, Principal Consultant at SAS Group, lobbied Environment Minister Melissa Price on behalf of Sunset Power, after the Clean Energy Regulator decided to refuse Sunset Power's application for funds for an upgrade to Vales Point from the federal Emissions Reduction Fund.<sup>99</sup> Price subsequently 'asked the independent emissions reduction assurance committee to review how coal-fired power stations could earn carbon credits under the climate scheme'.

SAS Group was founded in 2009 by former federal MPs Santo Santoro<sup>100</sup>, Larry Anthony<sup>101</sup> and the late Con Sciacca.<sup>102</sup> Con Sciacca was a former Queensland-based Labor MP, while Anthony is the last in the line of a three-generation family dynasty of NSW-based National Party politicians. Anthony and Sciacca were both defeated at the federal election in 2004. Santo Santoro<sup>103</sup>, a Queensland-based Liberal senator and Howard cabinet minister, was dumped in 2007 for breaching the Ministerial Code of Conduct.<sup>104</sup>



Open Cut Coal Mine in Australia  
© Greenpeace/Dean Sewell

Santoro and Sciacca were both born in Sicily and are each prominent figures in the Australian-Italian community. Santoro has also held the role of president of the Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry<sup>105</sup>, hosting many guests from the political, business and Italian community.<sup>106</sup> Santoro's Queensland Liberal faction included George Brandis, former Liberal Party member of the Australian Senate, leader of the government in the Senate during the Turnbull leadership period 2015-2017 and attorney-general of Australia during the Abbott-Turnbull leadership period from 2013-2017.<sup>107</sup>

Santoro has also been involved with the Queensland division of the Australian-American Association (AAA). The Australian American Association, established by Sir Keith Murdoch and headquartered in New York, is "a forum for collaboration and exchange between political and

business leaders" expanding defence, trade, energy and infrastructure and "serving the relationship between the United States and Australia".<sup>108</sup> The American Australian Business Council<sup>109</sup> is the policy arm of the AAA. Key individuals involved in the AAA include Rupert Murdoch, son of Keith Murdoch and Executive Chairman of News Corp, and Andrew Liveris, brother-in-law of Tony Bellas and former CEO of Dow Chemical.

Larry Anthony<sup>110</sup> is a former stockbroker and investment banker<sup>111</sup> and current federal president of the Nationals. Anthony was appointed non-executive director of Queensland government owned corporation SunWater Limited. Anthony was previously the senior vice president of the federal National Party. He was also a Howard government minister and parliamentary secretary to trade (1998-2004).

## CASE STUDY 2: GROUNDWATER FOR ADANI'S CARMICHAEL COAL MINE

On 8 April, 2019, Adani Group received approval for the Groundwater Management Plan for its much-delayed Carmichael coal mine in Queensland's Galilee Basin, the final federal approvals hurdle for the mine.<sup>112</sup>

The CSIRO had earlier provided a scathing assessment of the modelling underpinning the application, stating, in a joint report with Geoscience Australia, that, 'the modelling used is not suitable to ensure the outcomes sought by the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Protection Act are met', and that Adani's approach was, 'not sufficiently robust to monitor and minimise impacts to protected environments'.

The decision fell to the Environment Minister, Melissa Price. As noted above, before entering politics Price was a lawyer for a subsidiary of Mitsubishi Development, which owns several coal mines in Australia including the Blackwater, Gregory Crinum, Goonyella Riverside, Norwich Park, Peak Downs, Saraji, Daunia, Caval Ridge

and Broadmeadow mines in Queensland. The company also owns the Hay point coal terminal in Mackay, and has significant shareholdings in the Clermont Coal Mine.<sup>113</sup>

Price's decision for Adani came after substantial internal and external pressure. As reported by the ABC:

*'The Queensland Liberal National Party opposition called her "delay" in approval "an absolute disgrace".<sup>114</sup> Resources Minister Matt Canavan denied reports that he threatened to quit<sup>115</sup> unless the Environment Minister gave Adani's plan assent. Queensland senator James McGrath warned he would publicly call for Melissa Price's resignation unless she did the "right thing" by Adani.<sup>116</sup><sup>117</sup>*

Matt Canavan and James McGrath's role in the Dirty Power network have already been outlined in this report above. Queensland Environment Minister, Leanne Enoch, said that the decision 'reeks of political interference'.





The CSIRO subsequently provided approval of the decision after the fact, stating that:

*“CSIRO is of the view that Adani’s responses should satisfy the recommendations to update the groundwater models, and are directed to address the modelling related issues and concerns in our advice, noting that there are still components of that advice that will need to be addressed through approval of [a] research plan”.<sup>118</sup>*

In 2017 Transparency International Australia (TI) released a damning report into corruption risks in the mining approvals process in Australia.<sup>119</sup> The report found the existing system of checks and balances failed to deliver effective transparency and accountability while inadequate regulation of political donations and lobbyists, the movement of staff between government and industry and the culture of mateship were significant factors leading to undue influence in the approvals process. In the Summary, under the heading ‘Avenues for Influence’, Transparency International highlights the problem:

*“Revolving doors can be between lobbyists and government representatives and officials, and industry and government representatives and officials. Australia takes considerable pride in the ethos of mateship as a defining national characteristic. Yet, this lauded attribute can create a corruption vulnerability...when the relationships, and revolving doors between government, industry and lobbyists are examined.”*

As Transparency International CEO Serena Lillywhite summed up in the foreword:

*“Greater regulation of political donations, lobbyists and the movement of staff between government and industry, would help reduce risks that could enable corruption to occur.”<sup>120</sup>*



*Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, brandishes a lump of coal in the House of Representatives © AAP*

## CONCLUSION

That the coal industry is broadly influential in Australia is widely accepted. However, the mechanisms through which it exerts that power are less well known. This report has highlighted the changing professional and personal relationships at the centre of a network of influence organised around coal.

While none of the relationships or decisions analysed in this report may appear improper on their own, when taken as a whole, the *Dirty Power* network outlined here raises significant questions about the influence of the coal industry over the federal government and Australia's efforts to fight man-made global warming.

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