

## **Drawing a line in the sand at Anvil Hill**

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**The proposed Anvil Hill coalmine in NSW is rapidly becoming a central battleground in the fight against climate change.**

For the past year Save Anvil Hill Alliance, led by residents in the Upper Hunter Valley, has skirmished with the state Labor government in an attempt to scupper the giant new open-cut mine. They have forced delays of many months on the mine owners Centennial Coal.

Centennial Coal is Australia's largest independent coal company: last year, it produced 15 million tonnes of coal.

The Anvil Hill coalmine would produce up to 10.5 million tonnes of coal a year. When burned, this coal would produce more greenhouse pollution than NSW's entire transport sector of 4 million vehicles.

Now, with a possible approval imminent, the united front of Greens, environmentalists, farmers, community activists and local people are planning a weekend of civil disobedience at the mine site.

Australia is the world's largest coal exporter with a third of the global coal trade coming from Australia's ports.

When burned, Australia's coal exports create as much greenhouse gas emissions as the total domestic emissions for the whole country.

The coal industry is dominated by multinational corporate giants, such as BHP, Rio Tinto and Xstrata, and wields enormous influence over governments. According to Clive Hamilton, author of *Scorcher*, an expose on climate policy in Australia, "The Howard government represents the interests of a small but powerful group of corporations ... climate change policy in Canberra has for years been determined by a small group of lobbyists who happily describe themselves as the 'greenhouse mafia'."

Mining in NSW is central to the power of the coal industry, which has just successfully lobbied for government approval of a major expansion of the port of Newcastle, already the world's largest coal port.

Activists from Rising Tide have pledged to peacefully block the construction of a new coal loader at the port.

NSW Greens MLC Lee Rhiannon, who convened a coal crisis summit this month, has been a vocal critic of the Lemma government's failure to rein in the coal industry. She says there's a need for a "just transition" plan to create sustainable industries, such as renewable energy manufacturers, which can allow coalmining to be phased out.

Rhiannon said the importance of stopping the opening of the Anvil Hill mine has been reinforced

after revelations about the use of water by the coal industry and coal-fired power stations. “The threat of zero water allocations in the Upper Hunter must be a wake up call for the NSW government’s approach to coal mining. Each year this mine would use a massive 400 megalitres of Hunter River water at the expense of agriculture and the local economy.”

Opposition to the expansion of coal mining in the Hunter region is not new, but it has been strengthened by the rising awareness of the catastrophic effects of global warming. Local residents concerned over dust, noise and health problems have been buoyed by the vocal opposition to coalmine expansion by the multi-million-dollar horse stud and wine growing industries that dominate employment in the Upper Hunter.

The Greens and other environmentalists have been able to work with these communities to connect local to global concerns over greenhouse gas pollution.

Ben Pearson, clean energy campaigner with Greenpeace, is amazed by the exponential growth in understanding of climate change. “People really get it. We have coal miners working with farmers, church people and students. All of them have particular concerns but all of them also understand what climate change means not just for them and their children but everyone across the world.”

Like the campaign against the Jabiluka uranium mine in the NT, the combination of local opposition with a growing national and global movement has the potential to become a potent force.

Actions are planned for Sydney and throughout the Hunter and will be kicked off by a weekend of action at Anvil Hill. The weekend of community action, on June 2-3, will be an opportunity for people in Sydney concerned about climate change to meet with residents and farmers in a show of solidarity and defiance. Workshops, music and tours of the mine site will culminate in a mass walk onto the mine site.

According to Pearson, “We want the weekend to be fun, informative and powerful. People can camp on Saturday night and learn about climate change and the local area. On Sunday many more will come from around NSW to make clear this mine will not proceed.”

“This is the real beginning”, Pearson continued. “We are at a point where a critical mass of people understand the importance of ending the export coal industry and shifting to clean energy. It is not just about Anvil Hill — there are another 15 new mines planned, but this is where we draw the line in the sand. The power we build here will be used to stop other mines and resist the expansion of the coal industry in Australia.”

- Visit <http://www.anvilhill.org.au> for more information.

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