

How to Create a Country with no Heart

- Stack and Pack the Coast

by Viv Forbes
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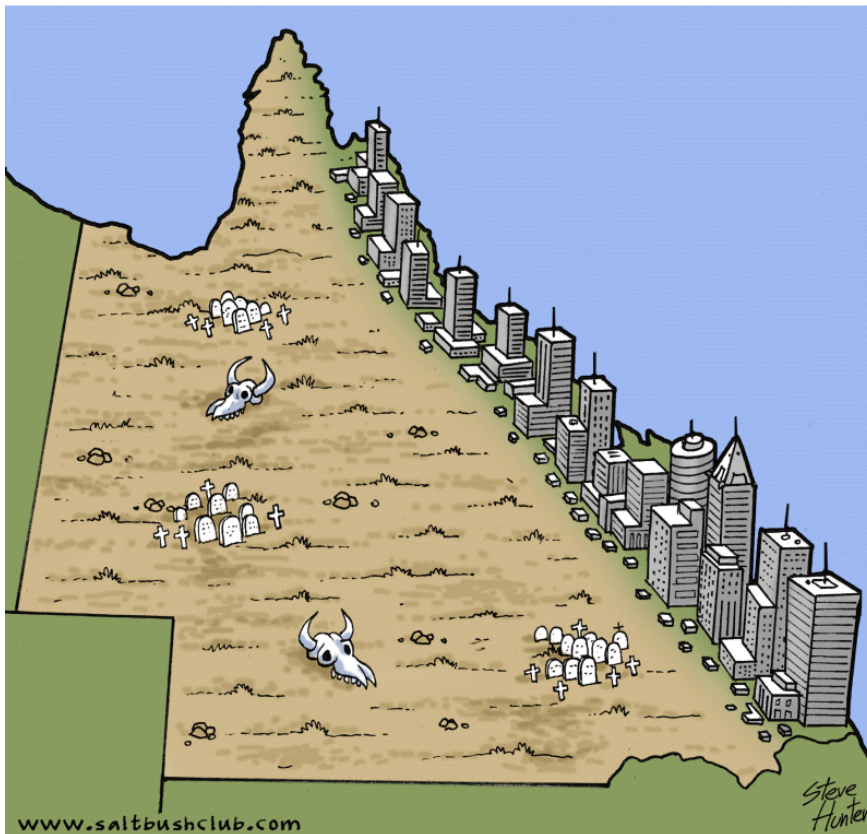
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What happened to Australia's once-bipartisan policies favouring decentralisation? Why is every proposal to develop an outback mine, dam, irrigation scheme or a real power station now labelled "controversial" by the ABC and opposed by the ALP/Greens?

This coastal-city focus and the hostility to new outback industry (except for wind/solar toys) has surely reached its zenith with the recent state budget for Queensland.

The population of coastal and metropolitan Queensland is surging with baby-boom retirees, welfare recipients, grey nomads, tourists, overseas students, migrants and winter refugees. But the outback is dying with lagging industry and many aging farmers retiring to the coast. We are creating a country with no heart.

The Country with No Heart



This growing urban and seaside population needs power, water and food.

However two critical power-water-food infrastructure projects that have been on the drawing boards for decades did not even rate a mention in the state budget – an expansion of coal-fired power at Kogan Creek and a water supply dam at Nathan Gorge.

The current policy of all major parties is cluttering the countryside with piddling subsidised intermittent power producers like solar panels and wind turbines plus their expensive network of roads and transmission lines. This is inflating electricity prices, and future generations will see this bi-partisan energy policy as a disastrous blunder. It is also a mistake to encourage or subsidise private electricity cartels and put politicians, not engineers, in charge of power generation.

The Kogan Creek power station with its adjacent coal mine was opened in 2007. It is connected to the National Grid and integrated with local gas-fired and solar supplies. It was always planned to add another generating unit at Kogan Creek, but twelve long years have passed with no action.

Kogan Creek is crucial to maintaining a stable power supply to eastern Australia. This was demonstrated recently when a fault temporarily shut down Kogan Creek. The National Grid was barely maintained for about 30 minutes by the battery in SA until other base load generators could be started. With the likely 7 month closure of one damaged generating unit at Loy Yang power station, East Australian electricity supplies are now even more precarious.

Moreover, with the complete failure of the \$105M Kogan solar booster and delays to other solar plants which were to be connected to the grid, the duplication of Kogan Creek is urgently needed.

*(Here is a telling quote from one of the backers of the failed Kogan solar project:
"Solar works extremely well when the sun's out.")*

Coal produces reliable low-cost electricity from a concentrated area with less real environmental damage than gas, wind or solar. These low density energy sources need much more land to collect equivalent continuous energy from a wide area of bores, pipelines, turbines and solar collectors plus their backup generators, connecting roads and transmission lines. Most CSG wells also need to pump salt water from each bore before the gas will flow. Even if costly processes are used to extract fresh water from this salt water, brines are left behind and must be stored safely. This evil-genie of salt should be left in its underground lair and disturbed as little as possible.

It is becoming clear that that CO₂ does NOT drive global warming. Even if it did, when careful life-of-project studies are done for all of Qld energy sources, coal and hydro look likely to have the lowest carbon footprint with the least environmental harm (and they do not slice, dice or fry birds and bats).

The surface disruption from an open cut coal mine is 100% and it shocks the senses. However, it recovers 100% of concentrated energy from a small area of land – far less than is permanently sterilised by roads and schools, and there is no intention of restoring them. Even if the open cut was abandoned at the end of mine life, slow but relentless natural healing would immediately start. However, instead of treating the final void as an expensive liability to be refilled with overburden, it should be seen as an asset to be contoured as a pleasant lake or used for burial of the growing mountains of urban waste.

The need for reliable economical electricity is urgent. However, if Kogan Coal Power is too-close-for-comfort for Jacki Trad, her Environment Minister and the greens of South Brisbane, the next real power station option is Collinsville.

The need to conserve more water is also urgent. Nathan Gorge has been known as an ideal dam site for 50 years, but still nothing is done. The site and catchment make it likely to be a high-yielding, cost-efficient dam. It is vital to the continuing development of the Surat and southern Bowen Basins and its water could be used for irrigation, power generation or fed into the Condamine/Darling River in droughts.

Kogan and Nathan are decentralising projects that could provide community insurance for blackouts, floods and droughts.

It is the outback that produces most of Australia's food, minerals, energy, water, exports and jobs. And it produces serious income for state governments addicted to ever-rising taxes and royalties.

Anti-development policies, land-use sterilisation, climate alarmism and green law-fare are destroying the future for our kids and grandkids. Current policies will stack-and-pack the coasts and major cities leaving a depopulated outback to uncontrolled floods and droughts, lantana and woody-weeds, wild cats and dogs, wild fires, feral pigs and the occasional park ranger or tourist bus.

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Some reading:

How they wasted millions on solar energy at Kogan:

<https://www.smh.com.au/business/fastmoving-clouds-how-cs-energys-kogan-creek-solar-boost-project-failed-20170516-gw5p2u.html>

Seven month outage at Loy Yang:

<https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/agl-energy-flags-seven-month-outage-at-victoria-s-loy-yang-power-plant-20190607-p51vq0.html>

Viv Forbes is not a member of any political party, and has no vested interests in mining, energy or bio-fuels. He has qualifications and experience in science and industry and has spent decades on exploration, assessment and development of oil, gas and coal and grazing management in the Bowen/Surat Basins. He also inspected the Nathan Gorge dam site while employed by the Queensland State Government about 50 years ago.