



Mining rules outdated

MONDAY'S public meeting on uranium mining at Ben Lomond has brought responses by our three Government MPs, and economist Colin Dwyer, all asserting that uranium mining could proceed under strict environmental regulations (TB, April 29,30).

I am an international geological consultant and I possess mining tenements in North Queensland. I have been dealing with the relevant Queensland Departments – Mines (DNRM) and Environment (DEHP) – for 10 years, in the same way that the Ben Lomond owner, Canada's Mega Uranium, will be dealing.

The Queensland DNRM has not overseen any producing uranium mines for 24 years. Our most senior Parliamentarian Minister Crisafulli's statement that he wanted "tough environmental regulations introduced" indicates that the Government recognises that it needs to review, change and upgrade its mining environmental regulations from 24 years ago.

With the best will in the world, the Queensland Government is starting behind the eight ball in setting up the right environmental regulations at Ben Lomond. So nobody can assert that "Ben Lomond will be mined under strict environ-

mental regulations" when modern, tested regulations are not even yet in place. The environmental security of Ben Lomond mining is not yet assured for the life of the mine, 10-30 years.

Uranium mining's intractable problem is that its radioactive products persist in the environment for thousands to millions of years. The Australian Government has a clause in its contract with ERA, at Ranger uranium mine in the Northern Territory, that ERA must safeguard their mining products for 10,000 years.

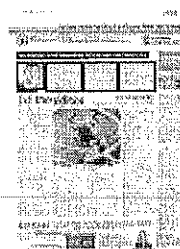
This is not some extravagant ambit claim to satisfy "left-wing greenies"; it is an absolute need mandated by our Federal scientists and politicians. For exactly the same reasons, Ben Lomond will also require monitoring, security of the mine dumps and dams, and cleaning up of any spills for 1000 if not 10,000 years.

That is, 1000 to 10,000 tropical wet seasons. Can we as a society organise this? When someone comes up with an answer, we might be in a position to go ahead.

DR BILL LAING,
Kelso.



LONG ROAD; A gated road leading to the Ben Lomond mine site which would require ongoing security.



Minister appears to be living on another planet

ANDREW Cripps has the gall to label people who want to preserve the Great Barrier Reef from the ravages of coal port expansion as extremists.

And this from a minister who does not dip his lid to the science of climate change,

Meanwhile this state is in grip of the worst drought ever in recorded history and you stand there in your stocking feet and lie to graziers and farmers when you say ... it's just the natural cycle.

There is nothing natural about species extinction at this rate, unless of course one compares it to the asteroid which crashed

into the world eons ago, causing the worldwide extinction of dinosaurs.

Well it looks to me like there will be a few more dinosaurs buried in Queensland to be dug up in a few million years at this rate: the remains of mega coal mines and mega uranium, not to mention the remains of the once largest living organism on the planet: the Great Barrier Reef.

What is wrong with you, Andrew?

Just because Abbott thinks the science of the natural world undermines extreme capitalism, it doesn't mean you should follow blindly.

Surely your mother taught you better than to follow the Pied Piper? I'll bet she did. And I bet she taught you better manners than to steal.

The coal mines of today are not only wrecking our reef: they are stealing all of our futures.

And when people start killing themselves, as they are in the Outback because of drought, then it behoves you to get real about mega climate change in a mega hurry.

**JENNY STIRLING,
Wulguru**



Minister Andrew Cripps.



In a state over uranium

Environment a priority if mining goes ahead

**ANTHONY
TEMPLETON**



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THE prospect of uranium mining recommencing at Ben Lomond has caused the political temperature to rise in the lead-up to next year's state election.

More than 100 people, including environmentalists and political activists, attended an anti-uranium rally in Townsville on Monday to protest against the State Government's decision to overturn the decades-old ban on mining the radioactive ore.

Concerns were raised about restarting mining at Ben Lomond, about 50km west of Townsville, which could contaminate parts of the Burdekin River catchment in heavy rain events.

Labor candidate for Thuringowa Aaron Harper said the

Newman Government broke an election promise by allowing uranium mining and it could harm the health of North Queenslanders.

"We live in an area that has significant rainfall and cyclones ... which can easily lead to toxic spills into waterways (and) has happened previously at this very mine," he said.

"We risk the beautiful natural waterway that is the Burdekin River, which thousands of North Queensland residents rely on."

However, Thuringowa MP Sam Cox said uranium mining could provide greater economic opportunity to North Queensland.

"Mining and resources are one of the four pillars of the Queensland economy and we have to look at every opportunity," he said.

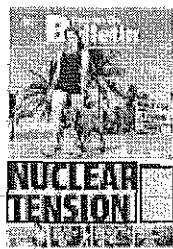
"Uranium mining will only happen under the strictest guidelines and when community and people safety is met.

"We need to look after the workforce of these mines and local communities."

Mundingburra MP David Crisafulli said he welcomed the new jobs the uranium industry would bring to the region but wanted tough environmental regulations introduced.

"While there are potential job opportunities ... I'd only support them if the environmental safeguards and public safety demands could be met," he said.

Townsville MP John Hathaway said commercial decisions would play a large role in whether uranium mining recommenced. "I do support any mining projects that can generate significant economic benefits to Townsville and Queensland if they meet very strict environmental and safety requirements," he said.



NUCLEAR TENSION

ANTHONY TEMPLETON

AN explosive public meeting on Townsville's nuclear future will bring to the fore years of simmering tensions and could be the first step towards deciding the fate of uranium mining in North Queensland.

The Keep Queensland Nuclear Free meeting will pit environmentalists against the arguments of the pro-mining lobby who say the Ben Lomond deposit is the key to unlocking the region's resource potential.

The mine, 50km west of Townsville, is regarded as one of the richest sources of uranium in the country.

The State Government lifted the decades-old ban in 2012, and there are fears of potential environmental and health risks if radioactive tailings leak into the Burdekin River catchment.

Citizens Against Mining at Ben Lomond spokesman Dave Sewell said the mine could return to production in the near future.

Continued page 4

Nuclear conflict expected at meet

From page 1

"In only two months' time, uranium mining will be legal in Queensland after the Newman Government broke their election promise and lifted the uranium mining ban," he said.

"That means a uranium mine in the Burdekin catchment is possible, as the highest-grade uranium in Queensland is located at Ben Lomond in Hervey's Range, upstream of Charters Towers' water catchment."

The Ben Lomond mining lease is owned by Canadian mining company Mega Uranium, which has yet to declare whether it will reopen a mine on the site.

Deputy Mayor Vern Veitch, who will be speaking at the meeting, said approving uranium mining at Ben Lomond risked the health of North Queenslanders.

"The tailings are radioactive and toxic, which is pretty bloody nasty for the environ-

ment," he said. "It's not just the environment that is at risk, it's people's health."

Economist Colin Dwyer described the debate as "scaremongering", given how unlikely he believed recommending mining the site was.

"They would go ahead with the Mary Kathleen mine at Mount Isa long before ... Ben Lomond," he said.

Acting Mines Minister John McVeigh said uranium mining in North Queensland would be subject to strict conditions.

"We will always put Queenslanders' health and safety first, but no one should be fooled by alarmist nonsense from extreme greens who will say anything to shut down Queensland's resources sector and seek to hinder economic development in regional areas," he said.

The meeting will be hosted by North Queensland Conservation Council and has several speakers, including Cr Veitch.

It will be held at the CWA Hall in Denham St at 7pm tonight.



Minister rejects mining naysayers while preaching benefits

Nuking uranium worries

SAMANTHA HEALY



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THE State Government has hit back at claims made during an anti-uranium forum in Townsville, saying any royalties could go towards building new hospitals, schools and roads.

Mines and Natural Resources Minister Andrew Cripps said uranium mining had the potential to generate significant

economic growth and jobs for Queensland, particularly in regional areas, with government "still on track" to have regulatory framework for uranium mining in place by July.

"There are a number of factors that will influence the timing of commercial decisions by industry whether or not to apply for a mining lease," Mr Cripps said.

"Factors include the world commodity price for uranium, market supply and demand for uranium, and mining costs."

The State Government said any recommencement of uranium mining in Queensland would be conducted under the strictest environmental and safety regulatory frameworks.

Mr Cripps' statements come after an anti-uranium forum, attended by about 100 people, was held in Townsville on Monday night.

Audience members heard from Dr Bill Williams from the Medical Association for the Prevention of War, Australian Conservation Foundation nu-

clear-free campaigner Dave Sweeney and Townsville deputy mayor Vern Veitch.

During the forum, Dr Williams warned uranium "hangs around for a long time" and is "not like mining other minerals", and any contamination could have long-lasting effects on the environment and health.

Mr Cripps argued Queensland had effective mining regulations to minimise and manage the environmental risks associated with uranium.

"These regulations include the ability for government to hold a financial assurance to ensure rehabilitation is carried out at the completion of mining, and a 'residual risk payment' to address any residual environmental risks following rehabilitation," he said.

Mr Sweeney told the forum the region's high rainfall events were a risk to tailings dams.

Mr Cripps hit back, saying the state had strict construction and monitoring conditions in place for tailings dams.

Responding to Cr Veitch's

concerns about overflows from tailings dams during big rainfall events, Mr Cripps said the dams were designed and operated to prevent discharges.

"The standards used for the design, construction, operation, modification and decommissioning of regulated structures mitigate the consequences arising from potential failure or collapse of those structures," he said.

The Ben Lomond uranium deposit, 50km west of Townsville, was discovered in 1975.



Forum told overflows show mining's a clear and present danger

Uranium safety queried

SAMANTHA HEALY



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RECENT overflows from flooded tailings dams at Clive Palmer's nickel refinery at Yabulu are proof the mining sector cannot guarantee the safety of North Queensland residents if proposed uranium mining gets the green light.

That was the message from anti-uranium mining campaigners to more than 100 people who attended a community forum last night about the possible restarting of uranium production at Ben Lomond, 50km west of Townsville.

The State Government lifted the decades-old ban in 2012.

Dr Bill Williams from the Medical Association for the Prevention of War said the mining of uranium was "not like mining other minerals".

"Uranium ... hangs around for a very long time," he said, warning contamination from dust, flooding or seepage into

the water table could have long-lasting effects on the environment and human health.

Australian Conservation Foundation nuclear-free campaigner Dave Sweeney warned the region's high rainfall events were a risk to dams used to store the waste left behind after mining.

He also downplayed the economic benefit of uranium mining labelling it an industry that "only delivers headlines and headache".

Deputy Mayor Vern Veitch said every Townsville City

councillor had supported a motion to keep Townsville nuclear free.

"It's one thing to call me a radical greenie but I don't

think any of the other councillors can be called radical," Cr Veitch said in response to Acting Mines Minister John

McVeigh's comments that "no one should be fooled by alarmist nonsense from extreme greens".

Cr Veitch questioned how any tailings dam would be sufficient given the Burdekin Dam had spilt numerous times in recent years due to high rainfall.

Townsville's three state MPs did not attend the meeting prompting strong words

from Opposition MP Jackie Trad. "Unless Townsville has a say it will be left out of any decision made in Brisbane," she said.

Mundingburra MP David Crisafulli said he was in Canberra to discuss the state's response to the recent flooding. Thuringowa MP Sam Cox was at a local P & C meeting and Townsville MP John Hathaway said he had advised organisers of a previous electorate commitment.

The forum heads to Charters Towers today.



SITTING IN: Families attended last night's meeting.



Uranium claims untrue

DR Bill Laing's letter (Questions on Uranium, *Townsville Bulletin* 14/5/2014) contains a number of claims which should not go unchallenged.

Firstly, the reason Ben Lomond never became an operational mine is because the Commonwealth announced in the mid-1980s its national policy to restrict uranium mining in Australia to just three mines, not because of a 1981 mining warden report.

Since that time, the Ben Lomond mine site has been in care and maintenance mode. There are no operational activities on site.

The site is subject to regular water testing and care and maintenance activities at Ben Lomond are strictly regulated through the conditions of the Environmental Authority issued for the project by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.

Under the existing Environmental Authority, mining or processing of uranium, or any other material, is not permitted at the Ben Lomond mine site. There is no tailings dam on-site.

I must stress that until the Queensland Government has its comprehensive framework in place, we will not accept or assess

any applications to mine uranium anywhere in the state, including at Ben Lomond. Should uranium mining be proposed anywhere in Queensland, applications will be subject to a rigorous assessment

process, strict environmental conditions and meet modern safety requirements before being considered for grant.

It is also important to note that the mining, transport and export

of uranium in Queensland will be managed under tight environmental controls regulated by both the state and federal governments and subject to international treaties.

Dr Laing wrongly claims that uranium would be transported through Townsville City to the

Port of Townsville. I have always stated that there are no plans to export uranium from Queensland ports, including Townsville.

Our uranium mining framework involves a Co-ordinator-General and environmental approvals process that the public will participate in.

Uranium mining has the potential to generate significant economic growth and job creation for Queensland, particularly in regional areas, with an in-ground value which is estimated at up to \$10 billion.

There's no doubt we must have the right framework in place to ensure we protect the community's health and safety and the environment, but we will not deny Queenslanders the prosperous economic future that these resources could help contribute to.

ANDREW CRIPPS,
Minister for Natural Resources
and Mines.



YELLOW CAKE FREE ZONE: There are no plans to export uranium through any port in Queensland.



Radiation risk doesn't need uranium mine

DR Bill Laing's (TB 14-5-14) and Andrew Cripps's letter (TB 16-5-14) regarding uranium mining at Ben Lomond may have missed the target regarding risks to the Townsville population.

The Ben Lomond uranium deposit was described in the 1981 mining Warders Court as having a "complex" geology and "faulting and fracturing is abundant in the area."

Townsville does have about the same average background radiation exposure as Brisbane and Sydney without including the radiation waves that occur and those that occur in Townsville as a normal routine are more than double in reading than at other localities.

Outdoors radiation waves in excess of 1.2 usv/h are not uncommon in Townsville and it would be in the community's best interests if these high readings were to be investigated in a more scientific manner than has occurred in the past.

The last testing in Townsville for background radiation and Radon was in 1990.

There are very good reasons to be concerned that the Ben Lomond uranium mine being 50km away and 300m higher than the Townsville urban area can result in uranium leachate being transferred to our populated areas, particularly if the mine precinct geology has been further damaged by high velocity explosives from the High Range Training Area.

Regardless of whether mining at Ben Lomond occurs or not there may be radiation issues affecting Townsville.

KEVIN PARKES,
West End.



Strict limits face miners of uranium

I REFER to Dr Bill Laing's letter regarding the recommencement of uranium mining in Queensland (Letters, TB, 5/5/2014).

Uranium mining has the potential to generate significant economic growth and create tens of thousands of jobs across Queensland, particularly in regional Queensland and has an estimated in-ground value of up to \$10 billion.

When we announced the recommencement of uranium mining in Queensland, the Newman Government appointed a uranium mining implementation committee, chaired by Cr Paul Bell, to establish standards for the development and operation of a uranium mining and export industry in Queensland.

The committee undertook extensive community engagement, including more than 70 submissions from local, national and international groups. This included other state governments, peak bodies and environment groups.

The framework is on track to be in place by July 2014. The Newman Government is committed to a world's best practice environmental, health and safety framework.

I can assure Dr Laing that all uranium mining lease applications will be subject to a rigorous approvals process and must meet very strict environmental and safety requirements.

ANDREW CRIPPS,
Minister for Natural Resources and Mines.