



Press Release

December 16, 2013

Japan Tropical Forest Action Network (JATAN)

JATAN are Opposed to Idemitsu's Boggabri Coal Extension
-- Their Mining Extension Could Have Big Impacts on Environment and Local Communities --

Australia, whose economy has been driven by “resource bonanza”, is now Japan's biggest coal supplier¹. At the same time the impacts of Australia's coal industry include depopulation as well as water depletion, farm land fragmentation and health problems. Boggabri is one of those communities that have been affected by the country's coal industry expansion.

Idemitsu's Boggabri Coal Mine has been expanded within Leard State Forest, located near Narrabri in north-west NSW. The mining expansion would give crucial influences not only to the biodiversity there but to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members and families. We JATAN urge Idemitsu Kosan to stop the expansion immediately and also ask JBIC (Japan Bank for International Cooperation) to review the decision that they have made to fund the Idemitsu project.

Leard State Forest is the largest piece of native vegetation in the Liverpool Plains, home to a large tract of White-Box Gum Woodland, a critically endangered ecological community, and many threatened flora and fauna including swift parrot, greater long-eared bat and koala, a national icon listed as the country's endangered species².

The indigenous inhabitants of the Liverpool Plains are the Gomeroi (also spelt Kamilaroi) people, who have lived in the area for at least tens of thousands of years, forming the oldest continuing culture on Earth. A group of Gomeroi people filed an application for a native title determination for the area including many mining company sites like Boggabri³. They are concerned that mining projects could destroy their sacred sites within Leard State Forest.

Idemitsu started coal production at Boggabri in 2006 and have expanded their production since 2010. Idemitsu Boggabri achieved coal production of 3.7 million tons in 2012⁴. JBIC signed a loan agreement amounting up to 350 million U.S. dollars with Idemitsu Australia Resources, an Australian subsidiary of Idemitsu Kosan in the aim of contributing to securing stable supply of mineral resources to Japan⁵.

What we are concerned about is that JBIC's loan decision may be incompatible with some articles of their “Guidelines for Confirmation of Environmental and Social Considerations”. For example, Idemitsu's proposed offsets and rehabilitation plans may be fundamentally inadequate in the reference of the pertinent section of JBIC guidelines⁶. And also the Gomeroi group claim over their native title will show that Idemitsu's efforts to obtain prior informed consent of indigenous people may not be well organized despite “Indigenous Peoples” stipulation of the guidelines⁷.

On September 16, 2013 a group of local-based activists and farmers called the Northern Inland Council for the Environment (NICE) launched a legal challenge in the Federal Court against Whitehaven and Idemitsu's plans for major new mines out at Maules Creek⁸.

Today, there was a big blockade^{9,10} at Whitehaven done by many local people and NGOs like Greenpeace to protest against coal mining companies including Idemitsu. Mr. Rick Laird, who's family the Leard Forest is named after, is concerned about the threats that Idemitsu's expansion would have on the rare forests and his community livelihoods – “We've been fighting these expanding coal mines for over three years to protect our forest, farms and water. Idemitsu's expanding mine will destroy 2000ha of forest containing endangered habitat and sacred sites. Idemitsu are in breach of the people's trust when they continue to go against the community's needs, undermine our livelihoods, and our shared future.”

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Protest assembly by local people against Whitehaven and Boggabri
(December 16, 2013 Picture by Alex Bloom)



Protesters chained to their legs to blockade road
(December 16, 2013 Picture by Alex Bloom)



Banners saying "JBIC Don't fund Boggabri Coal!" and
"Idemitsu, Don't Destroy Koala Habitats!"
(December 16, 2013 Picture by Alex Bloom)

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- ¹ Coal exporters jostle for opportunity as Japan ramps up use
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/01/japan-coal-idUSL3N0DBH9U20130501>
 - ² Boggabri Coal Mine Extension :Approval by Australian Government
<http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/notices/assessments/2009/5256/2009-5256-approval-decision.pdf>
 - ³ Gomeri Native Title claim flushes out 140 respondents
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-02-07/gomeri-native-title-claim-flushes-out-140-respondents/4507130>
 - ⁴ Boggabri Coal Mine Environment Approval Modification
http://www.hansenbailey.com.au/assets/pdfs/boggabri_mod/Main_Report_Boggabri_Coal_Mine_Development_Consent_Modification_EA.pdf
 - ⁵ Loan for Boggabri Coal Mine Expansion Project in Australia <http://www.jbic.go.jp/en/information/press/press-2013/0516-7513>
 - ⁶ [GUIDELINES FOR CONFIRMATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS](#) p. 13 (Examination of Measures)
 - ⁷ JBIC Guidelines p. 15 (Indigenous Peoples)
 - ⁸ Federal Court Challenge to Mine Approvals <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2013/07/19/3806659.htm>
 - ⁹ Police cut free protesters blocking Whitehaven's Maules Creek coal mine
<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/police-cut-free-protesters-blocking-whitehavens-maules-creek-coal-mine-20131216-2zggd.html>
 - ¹⁰ Coalmine protesters at Maules Creek cut free and taken away by police
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/16/environmental-activists-blocking-coal-company-from-clear-felling-state-forest>