

Media Release - 30th October, 2017

Townsville bishops oppose mining in Galilee Basin

The Catholic and Anglican Bishops of Townsville have issued a [joint statement](#) in which they are critical of the “projected mega-mining developments across Queensland, especially the Galilee Basin”. In the town where Adani has chosen its headquarters and has aggressively promoted its credentials, it is significant that the two most prominent faith leaders are being critical of coal mining in the Basin.

The Right Reverend William Ray of the Anglican Diocese of North Queensland, and the Most Reverend Timothy Harris of the Catholic Diocese of Townsville, sent a statement to all the parishes in their respective dioceses on the weekend. In the statement, they express concerns about a range of environmentally destructive practices, including the impacts of mining the Galilee Basin on the “age-old water resources” of the Artesian Basin.

Adani has held out the promise of jobs and the revival of Townsville to the Mayor and residents of Townsville. Optimism among many in Townsville is high, but the town remains divided.

The Bishops have clearly aligned themselves with that side of the public debate which would protect the Great Barrier Reef, the State’s forests, groundwater and the well-being of people. They are critical of “Big-business”, the maximising of profits and shareholder dividends, and they stand instead alongside “greenies”, “leftists”, scientists, “First Australians” and employees in need of permanency.

They lament the “impending loss of the Great Barrier Reef with back-to-back yearly coral bleaching across two thirds of its length. Continuing toxic run-off from land holdings, increasing ocean temperatures, regular monsoonal failures, a prospective wholesale increase of freighter traffic, the loss of marine diversity and extensive marine pollution are accelerating reef deterioration. Inadequate and limited government rectification spending is not matching needs.”

The phrasing in Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, reverberates through the Townsville Bishops’ statement. They tellingly quote Pope Francis after his appointment, when he said, “In this day and age, unless Christians are revolutionaries, they are not Christians.”

While Townsville residents cannot hope that their vote in the coming State election will reduce the chances of political support for Adani in the short-term, the Bishops’ statement could help shift the mood of the electorate over time. In the 2016 census, 26.5 percent of the local population were Catholic and 15.2 percent were Anglican.

Thea Ormerod, President of the multi-faith environmental organisation, the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change, applauds the Bishops saying, “ARRCC congratulates Bishops Bill Ray and Tim Harris for their courageous stand today. Australia needs such prophetic witness to the importance of protecting our Common Home over profit-seeking extractive industries.”

Ormerod said, “In our view, Adani’s Carmichael mine should never be allowed to go ahead.”

“Regional hopes for employment of large numbers of people will be disappointed. Even in Queensland, many more people are already being employed in renewable energy projects and in industries such as agriculture and tourism which stand to lose because of the mine. As a nation, we have the resources to support those communities who are being impacted by our necessary transition away from mining” she said.

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