



We'll all be better off with a Labor voice inside a Labor Government

LET'S CHANGE COWPER WITH LABOR & ANDREW WOODWARD



14 March 2019

The Hon. Bill Shorten MP
Leader, Federal Parliamentary Labor Party and Leader of the Opposition
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Hello Bill,

Greetings from Cowper where I can report the people of Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Kempsey and the mid-north coast are very enthusiastic about your vision and plan for Australia and are keen for change at this year's election. I am working hard to win the seat, join you in government and bring about much-needed change in our part of the world.

The purpose of this letter is to relay to you some feedback I have been receiving from electors concerning environmental policy. People are very enthusiastic about Labor's plans for the environment and full of praise for the Hon. Tony Burke, Shadow Minister for the Environment and the great work he has done in both government and more recently in opposition.

The first issue of concern is **new coal mines in Galilee Basin in Queensland**. In a year of campaigning, I am yet to meet a supporter of any of the 13 mines proposed by four developers, including Adani, Gina Rinehart and Clive Palmer. I can, however, confirm I have met many thousands of people opposed to these and any new coal mines. [I too and am opposed to these and any new mines](#). I was also pleased to see NSW Labor Leader, Michael Daley, recently state his opposition to any new coal mines in the state.

Many people have called upon Labor to merely state we will, for example, "*Stop Adani*" and that will answer their issue. I have explained to hundreds that it isn't as simple as this. We can't break the law. I have stated that we have to follow the law and a process of review and we will do that in government, should we win.

Based on my experience as a Ministerial 'staffer' in the Keating and Carr Governments, new governments do four things (1) Review decisions of the previous government, (2) Consider new matters submitted for approval, (3) Consider any new information and (4) implement their policies. I have explained to people that all mines in the Galilee Basin, including Adani's proposal for Carmichael Mine, will be subject to this regular review, through the lens of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

While I have said this numerous times and Tony Burke has explained his process for review (see transcript excerpt), many people have said they would like to hear directly from you that these mines will go through this process of review, as is the ordinary business of a new government. [I encourage you to make this clear statement](#). Such a statement wouldn't put taxpayers at significant financial risk nor would it pre-judge any decision, as is the concern of Tony Burke. It is simply explaining everyday government processes.

The second issue concerns your announcements at the Australian Labor Party National Conference that in government [Australia's environmental laws will be rewritten and that you will establish a National Environment Protection Agency](#). Both are excellent news and will have a positive impact on this country for generations.

Many people and I would now like to see some more detail on both initiatives as well as a broader statement on environment policy from yourself. For the record, my key interests in the environment portfolio are: plans for revegetating Australia, sustainable forest management, arresting species decline, a new national waste policy, including environmental accounting in the national accounts, enshrining the principles of ecologically sustainable development in all government and business decision making and a greater focus in government on the Sustainable Development Goals.

I would also like to inform you that [Labor's energy policy](#) released in November 2018 has been very well received as has the subsequent announcement on incentivising hydrogen. I am quite happy with the coordination and mix of policies across climate change, energy and environment. They're what we need.

Bill, I believe there's a significantly greater want from the community for the accelerated roll-out renewable energy, faster and broader action on climate change and a greater emphasis on conservation and sustainability. Labor is the only party of government in this country that can do what our communities, country and planet need.

Thank you again for your leadership and commitment to our country and its environment.



ANDREW WOODWARD

Labor Candidate for Cowper

Copy to:

The Hon. Tony Burke, Shadow Minister for the Environment.

The Hon. Mark Butler, Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy

Transcript Excerpt

Tony Burke, 24 February 2019, with Barrie Cassidy on ABC TV Insiders

CASSIDY: On the Adani mine which got a bit of attention this week as well, Bill Shorten said that, and he said it often, for that mine to go ahead, we would need to environmental and economic standards. You are well placed to make judgements around that as Shadow Environment Minister, do you think it stacks up environmentally?

BURKE: On this, can I first of all say from environmental, from the environmental end, I have always been a bit sceptical of the project. I'm concerned about from what's been reported the Government doesn't appear to have followed the law with respect to the use of the water trigger. Some of what they have dealt with with threatened species and their lack of action when coal-laden water has been dumped into the Caley Valley wetlands. But there's a reason why and the Green Party knows this, every time they say Labor must tell us what they would do with environmental approvals on Adani. If I were to do that, any subsequent decision would be unlawful and that's been the case under the EPBC act and been clear since 2004 when the Howard Government, to stop a renewable energy project of all things, made an election commitment about the orange-bellied parrot. If you pre-judge the decision, the decision is unlawful. What I will say is when asking whether it stacks up environmentally, I have always been sceptical about it. I don't believe the Government has appropriately followed the law from the reports that I have seen. I will apply the law. If I were to say what the Greens keep begging me to say, they know, and they don't have to provide an Environment Minister so they can get away with this wedge, they know that if I were to say that, if I were to, Adani would definitely win. And my obligation here is to make sure that we apply environmental law.

CASSIDY: Alright. You are a sceptic. If the CFMEU are asking Labor candidates in Queensland to support the mine, and if they don't, they are threatening to campaign against them, being sceptical wouldn't satisfy them, they want outright opposition. What do you say to the Labor candidate in Queensland and what will they say?

BURKE: Everybody is in a position where in terms of the environmental approval it can't be pre-judged. It absolutely can't be. It is unlawful for it to be pre-judged. There are some deep problems with the way the Liberal Government has handled the environmental approvals here. And it doesn't matter whether it's someone saying you've got to approve the mine or whether it is someone saying you have to stop it. If you make an election commitment, saying this is exactly what we will do with environmental approvals, then under Australian law, under the EPBC act, that ultimate decision will be unlawful. And politically people might say it is easier to give a clear answer one way or the other about what you will do, but that will come to haunt you when a decision gets overturned in court.