

A RISING TIDE: LINKING LOCAL AND GLOBAL CLIMATE JUSTICE

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On the 26th of September 2010, fifty activists from the grassroots climate action group, Rising Tide Australia, simultaneously occupied three export coal loading facilities in the Hunter Valley port of Newcastle, and thereby shut down the world's biggest coal exporting port for a day. Their action, shown in Figure 1 (below), left twenty coal ships stranded offshore and caused millions of dollars of demurrage and other costs to coal exporters. The Rising Tide Australia action gained extensive international media coverage, gave heart to climate justice campaigners in Australia and around the world, and sent a powerful statement to coal corporations and governments that business-as-usual is not an option in an era of emerging climate chaos.

Rising Tide Australia spokesperson, Annika Dean, explained the group's motivations:

We are staging an emergency intervention into Australia's number one cause of global warming. Around the world, the early impacts of unabated global warming are beginning to emerge. 2010 has been a year of tragic weather disasters....Global warming is happening now, and it is killing people. Australia is a major contributor to this crisis, due to the massive volumes of coal we export. We are exporting global warming to the world (Rising Tide Australia, 2010)

Rising Tide Australia's civil disobedience indicates community outrage and the emergence of a militant form of participatory democracy with respect to climate change, in which citizens directly intervene to stop economic activity that jeopardise sustainability locally and globally. A scan of the Hunter Valley's major regional newspaper, the *Newcastle Herald*, after each Rising Tide action, indicates many Hunter Valley

residents, farmers, environmentalists, trade unionists and others support civil disobedience to stop the threat that coal dependency poses to local and global ecological, social and economic sustainability, and to stop runaway climate change.

Figure 1: Port Blockade, Newcastle, 26 September 2010



(Photo courtesy: Conor Ashleigh, www.conorashleigh.com)

Coal has played a fundamental role as the primary energy source in industrial economies and societies. Coal-fired power generation continues to be the main way of providing electricity to the world. Currently about 39% of world electricity is supplied from coal-fired power stations (World Coal Institute, 2009), and 80% of Australia's electricity is generated from coal, with 40 percent of that generated in the Hunter Valley (ABARE, 2010: 21). However, it is becoming increasingly apparent to communities living in the Hunter Valley, and other coal regions, that coal mining and coal-fired power generation are not foundations for sustainable economies. Globally the coal economy contributes roughly 20 percent of global greenhouse gases making it the single largest contributor to climate change (Pew Center on Global Climate Change, 2008). With runaway climate chaos looming, coal

dependency has become a pathological condition, that is, a harmful condition that threatens ecological and social wellbeing.

Various linked social movements have emerged over the last 30 years to challenge the hegemony that the coal industry, mining corporations and state-owned fossil fuel power generators have over the Hunter Valley's ecological, economic and political trajectory. Many activists in these movements focus on restoring local ecosystem and human health and on protecting community rights to control local development. These are essentially environmental justice movement campaigns striving to achieve distributive, procedural and relational justice with respect to environmental equality within and between human communities (Bullard, 1994; Bryant, 1995, Faber, 1997; Low & Gleeson, 1998; Schrader-Frechette, 2002; Agyeman *et al.*, 2003).

The environmental justice movement is prominent in many Indigenous, coloured, poor rural and working class communities where disproportionate shares of environmental hazardous and toxic industries are located. The movement is, primarily, about equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens - environmental 'goods' and 'bads'. Environmental justice activists campaign to ensure that 'bads' are not dumped in politically and economically marginalised communities while 'goods' are concentrated in wealthy, politically powerful communities (Bullard, 1994). While the scope of the movement's campaigns span from the local to the global, the movement is about equity, but not necessarily about elimination of environmental 'bads' altogether.

Some environmental justice groups in the Hunter Valley, such as Minewatch and the Singleton Healthy Air Group that are focused on local environmental health issues, do not necessarily identify as part of the climate movement, the social movement that has emerged around the world to campaign for mitigation of, and adaptation to, the dangers of climate change.

However, there is a clear link between environmental justice and climate justice campaigns. The global climate justice focus is arguably a global environmental justice campaign that challenges the distributive, procedural and relational injustices that have put the burden of climate change impacts most acutely on vulnerable low-income and Indigenous communities, and particularly communities in the Global South.

Like the environmental justice movement, the climate movement is a broad social movement whose activists adopt a wide range of strategies.

Climate campaign that demand strong environmental regulation and corporate accountability, for internalizing the full social and ecological costs of carbon and ecosystem services, for public investment in zero carbon technologies, and for consumption levels within planetary limits are not necessarily incompatible with capitalist economies, nor might they necessarily fundamentally disrupt current societal power relations. However, these policies are also essentials of an ecologically sustainable, democratic and equitable economy.

The climate justice movement extends the focus of both the climate movement and the environmental justice movements to remove the specific global underlying causes of climate change as well as its inequitable global impacts.

Climate justice is not just a theoretical goal. It is also a political practice founded on empowerment of marginalized communities, resistance to corporate control of global affairs, and to ending the growth addiction inherent in global capitalism. Climate justice struggles connect with other struggles, particularly campaigns opposing the relegation of nature as a commodity to be bought and sold for profit, and with global justice campaigns to extend democratic control of the food, energy and water systems that are fundamental to life. Many climate justice organisations and activists are part of social movements that seek to build sustainable, cooperative, local communities from the bottom up (Rising Tide North America, 2009)

There is diversity within the climate justice movement that reflects perspectives from the Global North and South and debates about what strategies are needed to achieve climate justice, for example, over the role of governments.

However, most climate justice campaign organisations share a common basic analysis of climate change that

- the historical responsibility for the problem rests with corporations and governments in the Global North;
- that inequitable and disproportionate harmful consequences of climate change fall on Indigenous communities and poor and vulnerable communities mostly living in the Global South;
- that this constitutes an ecological debt (specifically a climate debt) owed by corporations and governments of the Global North to the people of the Global South; and

- that market solutions will not solve the problem (Building Bridges Collective, 2010).

Climate justice campaigns address four key themes: the root causes of climate change, the rights of affected communities, reparations to repay the historic climate debt, and promoting participatory democracy (Athanasίου & Baer, 2002; Pettit, 2004, *Rising Tide North America*, 2010).

Climate justice campaigns challenge the domination of corporate and state-owned, centralised fossil-fuel and nuclear energy systems and pose localised, community controlled, renewable energy technologies as a more democratic, accountable and sustainable alternative. Climate justice campaigns use grassroots organising and mass direct action to challenge corporate and government control of, and profiteering from, exploitation of nature as a commodity.

The global climate and political-economic systems influencing it are examples of complex adaptive socio-ecological systems. There are many examples of complex adaptive socio-ecological systems where the incremental growth and cumulative impact of many small disturbances can reach a scale where they can disrupt system control mechanisms and cause the system to cross critical thresholds. The rapid collapse of apparently stable systems and rapid transformation into a new and different state often follows (see Gunderson & Holling, 2002; Kinzig *et al*, 2006; Walker *et al*, 2006 for examples).

The impact of individual climate justice disturbances might be imperceptible and their influence on larger systems may seem insignificant, but the power of the climate justice movement is in the cumulative impact of many small disturbances across ecological, social, economic and political domains, and across spatial scales. These disturbances influence energy and corporate governance regimes, the social licence to operate of fossil fuel industries, and community power to achieve social change.

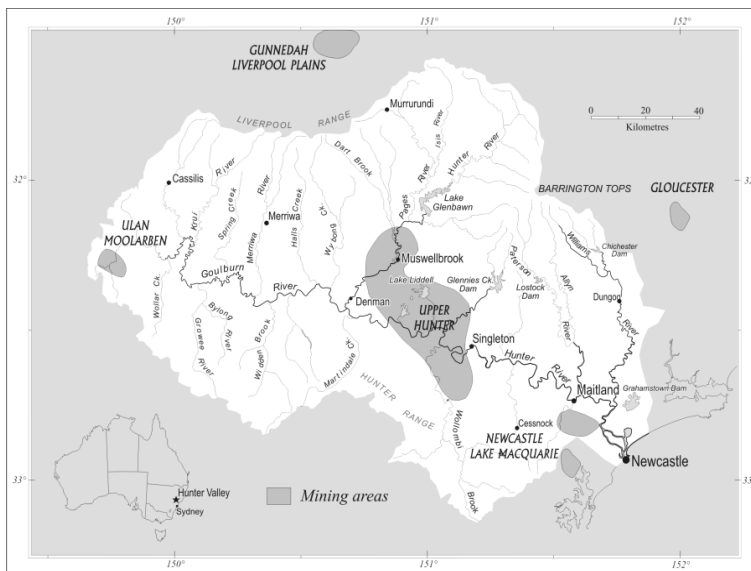
Rising Tide Australia is part of the network of grassroots organisations that make up the global climate justice movement. This paper examines Rising Tide Australia, as an example of a regionally-specific climate justice movement response to the coal industry and climate change.

The Hunter Valley Coal Industry: Embedded In Globalised Energy Markets

The Hunter Valley's climate justice movement is located in one of the world's climate change hot-spots. Australia is the world's largest coal exporter; and coal is Australia's largest energy export earner, with a value of \$55 billion in 2008-09, followed by LNG, crude oil and uranium. Energy exports accounted for 33 per cent of Australia's total exports of goods and services in 2008-09 (ABARE, 2010:2)

The overwhelming majority of Australia's thermal coal exports are from the Hunter Valley, through the port of Newcastle, located 150 kilometres north of Sydney in the State of New South Wales (NSW). Ninety million tonnes were exported in 2009, and export capacity will grow to 200 million tonnes annually by 2016 (NSW Department of Primary Industries Mineral Resources Division, 2009). Almost three-quarters of coal exports from Australia (and the Hunter Valley), go to the East Asian markets of Japan, Korea and Taiwan (World Coal Institute, 2009).

Figure 2: The Hunter River Catchment And Mining Areas



(Map courtesy Rey-Lescure, 2009)

The Hunter Valley's coal economy includes more than 40 coalmines, 6 coal-fired power stations, 3 export coal loaders and a vast network of railways, coal washeries, mining equipment maintenance and manufacturing businesses, and significant energy, mining and bulk materials handling research capacity. Over 280 square kilometres of the Upper Hunter Valley is directly affected by coal mining operations (shown in Figure 2 above) (Rey-Lescure, 2009).

The Hunter Valley's coal economy emerged from the first days of British occupation of the region. Australia's first coal mine was established at the mouth of the Hunter River in 1804, worked by dissident Irish convicts transported from the convict town of Sydney after the Vinegar Hill riots (Comerford, 1997).

The city that emerged from these early workings and the conglomeration of coal mining pit-top villages around the estuary of the Hunter River became Australia's sixth largest city, and a major heavy industry and manufacturing centre. The coal industry has steadily spread from Newcastle, over the last 200 years, up the Hunter River valley and over the ranges into the Liverpool Plains.

Huge longwall underground mines and vast open-cut mines have replaced the small underground mines of the colonial era. BHP Billiton's Mt Arthur mine in the Upper Hunter, extends for many square kilometres of underground and open-cut mines, and produces over 20 million tonnes annually, with most for export (BHP Billiton, 2009). With each tonne of coal burnt contributing about 2.4 tonnes of carbon dioxide, the output of the Mt Arthur mine contributes almost 55 million tonnes of greenhouse gas annually (Department of Climate Change, 2008).

The Hunter Valley coal industry was export focused from its outset, with a shipment of coal to India in 1810 being the first profitable export from Britain's Australian penal settlement (Coal River Working Party, 2006).

The industry grew steadily during the 1800s, but the industry really took off after the discovery of the South Maitland coalfield in the late 1800s. The pace and scale of labour migration into the Hunter Valley coalfields and industry growth in the late 1800s was unprecedented in Australia. In the five years between 1899 and 1904 the number of miners on the Hunter Valley's South Maitland coalfields exploded jumping from only 377 to 10,505 (O'Neill, 2007).

A second wave of massive industry expansion occurred in the 1980s, particularly after the NSW Labor Government decided to open up the Hunter region to global energy markets, leading to a massive growth in investment in mines, power stations, aluminium smelting, and coal export infrastructure (Phillips & Ross, 1980; Evans, 2010).

The third coal rush in the Hunter Valley, since the mid-1990s, has seen a near doubling of production and exports (especially from open-cut mines), and has been accompanied by industry consolidation (NSW Department of Primary Industries Mineral Resources Division, 2009). . The world's largest mining companies have diversified into a wide range of mineral and energy commodities to smooth out the demand fluctuations that affect particular commodities, and have acquired "world class" assets in many countries, including the Hunter Valley's coal resource.

Global mining and metals corporations, with Xstrata, Rio Tinto, BHP Billiton, Anglo Coal and Peabody dominating, own almost the entire coal export industry in the region. Chinese miners including Yangzhou and China's largest coal company, the state-owned Shenhua Energy Company, are becoming major investors in the Hunter Valley coal industry (and also in the adjacent Gunnedah Basin), and Indian investors are also showing interest in the region's coal resource (Kirkwood, 2008, Trembath, 2009, Munroe, 2010).

The Hunter Valley's carbon economy also includes two aluminium smelters, owned by Hydro Norsk and Rio Tinto that between them consume more than 15% of locally-generated electricity.

Consolidation has enabled large corporations to increase their power in negotiations with buyers, governments, and with workers and their unions. It allows them to become price-setters rather than price-takers in global markets. Their power has enabled them to secure generous infrastructure subsidies for industry expansion, deregulation of environmental and labour laws; and favourable responses to climate-change mitigation, even as concern about the links between fossil fuels and climate change grows in the wider community. (Pearse, 2007, 2009; Hamilton, 2007; Riedy, 2007).

Over the last 30 years, the industry has achieved huge productivity gains through mechanisation and an industrial relations regime that has forced a dramatic decline in unionisation and workers' power relative to employers (Macdonald and Burgess, 1998; Waring, *et al*, 2000).

Employment in the Hunter Valley coal industry steadily declined during the second half of the 20th century, and though there has been significant employment growth during the current coal ‘boom’, generally labour input per volume of coal produced has dramatically declined (NSW Department of Primary Industries Mineral Resources Division, 2009).

Coal royalties are a significant contributor to NSW Government revenues. In 2009, the NSW Government raised almost \$1 billion in mining royalties from Hunter Valley coal which the industry credits for “digging the State Budget out of debt” (NSW Minerals Council, 2010a). However, the State Government’s passion for coal income is more ideological than economic. Even if coal royalties were to grow by 85% in 2010-11, which is what the industry predicts, they will still comprise less than 4% of projected total revenue for 2010-11 estimated at \$57.7 billion (NSW Government, 2010:3).

Furthermore, local residents, unionists and business leaders are demanding that the cost of sacrificing the Hunter Valley’s ecosystems as a cash-cow for the Government jeopardises long term social and economic diversity and wellbeing, while little of the wealth generated from the Hunter Valley’s coal economy is invested in local infrastructure that is not coal-industry related (Strachan, 2009; 2010)

The Hunter Valley has the largest concentration of thermal coal plants in Australia. The NSW power generation industry was for many years part of a vertically integrated government-owned organisation, the Electricity Commission of NSW, which was responsible for the generation, transmission, distribution and retailing of electricity. This arrangement changed under the influence of the neo-liberal competition policy regime of the 1990s championed by organisations such as the Business Council of Australia, the Industry Assistance Commission and Treasury, resulting in the loss of thousands of jobs (Cahill and Beder, 2005).

The Australian Government’s National Competition Policy foreshadowed the establishment of the National Electricity Market and the breakup and corporatisation of state-owned electricity commissions, including privatisation in Victoria and South Australia. The Electricity Commission of NSW was renamed Pacific Power and its assets structurally separated into six business units comprising generators, retailers and the transmission network. The State retained ownership but corporatized the business units to give them a commercial focus (Rann, 2004).

During its 15-year rule, the NSW Labor Government has tried several times to fully privatise the state's electricity industry, despite strong community and labour union resistance. As this paper goes to press, the Government has approved a \$5.3 billion part-privatisation of the right to sell the energy generated by the state-owned power stations and of the retailing arms of state-owned corporations that sell electricity to 94% of NSW consumers. If this scheme succeeds, major Australian and global energy corporations, such as Origin Energy and the Hong Kong-based TruEnergy, will have complete operational control over the generators (Kaye, 2010).

The Government does intend to develop some new publicly-owned infrastructure: a new \$1.3 billion Cabbora coal mine, near Mudgee. This mine will supply state-owned power generators with coal at between \$35 to \$40 a tonne, well below the export market price of \$60 to \$70 a tonne and an artificial subsidy for polluting coal-fired power generation (NSW Nature Conservation Council, 2010), and further reducing incentive for energy efficiency or a transition to zero carbon technologies

Linking Local Environmental Justice and Global Climate Justice Issues

The huge increase in the scale of the Hunter Valley coal industry since its integration into global markets has brought with it a massive increase in the environmental and human health impact of mining and power generation. Community concern about these impacts have been raised since the 1980s when trade unions, led by the Newcastle Trades Hall Council-sponsored Ecology Centre, coordinated a campaign opposing the rapid expansion of the region's coal economy, and gave voice to community concern that:

The lack of consultation and participation of the people in decisions which will fundamentally affect the quality of life and the whole direction of development of the region in which they live (Phillips & Ross, 1980:2).

More recently, many Hunter Valley activists have joined groups such as Minewatch, the Carroona Coal Action Group, and Rivers SOS to campaign against the environmental injustices posed by the coal industry. Many are traditionally conservative rural people who have

organised because of their distress as heavy industry has transformed formerly rural countryside with growing cumulative impacts on the health of ecosystems and people (Connor *et al*, 2004; Higginbotham *et al*, 2006; Higginbotham *et al*, 2010).

In August 2005, one of the regional groups, the Hunter Environment Lobby, organised a forum on the theme *Building A Shared Vision and Partnerships for Justice and Sustainability in the Hunter* which, for the first time in decades, brought together activists from trade unions, Indigenous, environmental, student, farmer, health and welfare organisations and from clean-energy businesses.

The power of local voices is strengthened by alliances forged between environmental activists and the region's wine growers, thoroughbred horse breeders and farmers' organisations.

The Hunter Valley is a major wine region, renowned for its fine shiraz and semillon. It also contains the second largest concentration of thoroughbred studs in the world, outside Kentucky USA, and produces approximately half of all thoroughbred horses born in Australia annually. This represents 70 percent (in volume) and 80-90 per cent (in value) of Australia's thoroughbred exports (Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association Inc, 2010).

In May 2010, it took the lobbying power of the Thoroughbred Breeders Australia, supported by some of Australia's most wealthy and powerful people with interests in thoroughbred horsebreeding including the former prime minister Bob Hawke, former governor-general Mike Jeffery, shock-jock broadcaster Alan Jones, multi-billionaire businessmen Gerry Harvey, and advertising guru and media owner John Singleton, to convince the NSW Government to reject its first coal-mine proposal ever, and this was the relatively small, isolated, locally-owned Bickham mine (Robins and Cubby, 2010).

In October 2010, the NSW Farmers Federation called for a moratorium on new mining and coal seam gas projects in NSW, a call supported by the Hunter Valley thoroughbred Breeders Association. The Farmers Association's Mining Taskforce chairperson, Fiona Simpson stated:

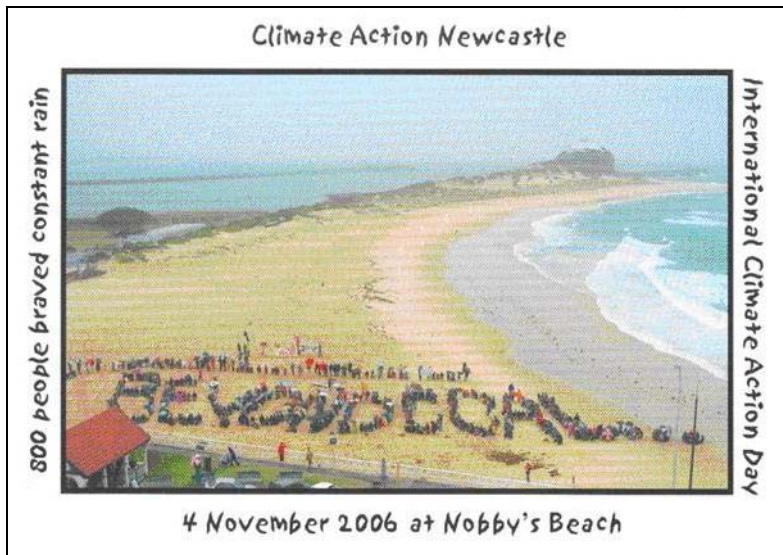
These industries are being allowed to flourish without proper concern for the threat they pose to farmland and water resources" (NSW Famers Association, 2010: 1).

The NSW Minerals Council replied by declaring the moratorium call a threat to the industry and:

A disproportionate and extreme response. They're advocating the use of a sledge hammer to crack a walnut (NSW Minerals Council, 2010b).

An informal alliance between environmental justice organisations and primary producers has emerged in the region calling for a *Future Beyond Coal*. This demand was graphically demonstrated in a human sign made on Newcastle's Nobby's Beach on International Climate Action Day, in November 2006 (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Postcard from Newcastle: International Day of Action on Climate Change



(Postcard courtesy *Climate Action Newcastle*, 2006)

Global Networks

In contrast to the local environmental justice focus of the coal community organisations, Rising Tide Australia has a global climate justice focus. Rising Tide's activism is targeted at coal exports and the immorality of an Australian economy that thrives at the expense of the world's poorest and most vulnerable communities threatened by climate change.

Steve Phillips stated Rising Tide Australia's climate justice motivation as follows:

Australia's economy, as many of the enemies of sustainability like to point out, is built on resource exploitation. Coalmining companies have governments and even unions wrapped around their finger, and anybody who dares call for a contraction of the coal industry is publicly caned as a dangerous extremist. It is in this economic and political climate that those of us who care for the ongoing sustainability of life on Earth must now demand swift and radical contractions of the fossil fuel industries – chiefly coal – leading to a total phase out (Phillips, 2007: 2).

Since its formation in 2004, Rising Tide Australia has used grassroots community organising and education, direct submissions to governments, and civil disobedience actions calling for a transition to a *Future Beyond Coal*. Rising Tide Australia activists have opened new fronts in Australian climate change litigation, succeeding in 2006 in forcing coal mining companies to disclose the indirect carbon dioxide emissions from burning coal exported from NSW as part of their environmental impact statement (Rose, 2009). In 2009, Rising Tide Australia activists challenged Macquarie Generation's emission of unlimited levels of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere from its Hunter Valley power stations in contravention of the NSW *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* (Environmental Defenders Office, 2009).

Rising Tide Australia activists have also protested at coal company annual general meetings, occupied the Newcastle offices of Peabody Coal and the Australian Labor Party in Sydney, blockaded Federal Parliament, and disrupted Question Time in the Senate.

For each of the last four years, Rising Tide has organised the *Peoples' Blockade of the World's Biggest Coal Port*, a flotilla of hundreds of canoes and watercraft halting shipping traffic in the port of Newcastle.

In 2008, Rising Tide organised a Climate Camp in Newcastle, inspired by others organised at coal-fired power stations in the UK. Over 1000 activists participated in the Newcastle Climate Camp, which culminated in a blockade that shut down the Carrington coal railway line for half a day. In December 2010, Rising Tide Australia coordinated another Climate Camp at Bayswater Power Station, Australia's largest coal-fired power station. Like the first Climate Camp, the Bayswater Climate Camp involved workshops and forums on climate change issues and solutions, music and entertainment. The finale of the Climate Camp was a peaceful mass action in which 70 activists were arrested blockading a railway used to transport coal to Bayswater Power Station.

Exposing coal industry public relations spin has been a central element of Rising Tide Australia's campaigns. In 2007, the NSW Minerals Council, the industry association representing coal miners, launched a "*Life, Jobs, A cleaner future. Brought to you by mining*" campaign that sought to identify the benefits of mining and minerals to contemporary Australian wellbeing. The *Brought to you by mining* campaign targeted the major mining regions of NSW (the Hunter Valley and Illawarra) using billboards, TV commercials, press advertising and a website to provide information "about the industry's contribution to modern life, from employment and the economy to electricity and consumer items" (NSW Minerals Council, 2007). Launching the campaign, the CEO of the NSW Minerals Council, Nikki Williams, stated:

Unfortunately, the public discussion on global warming has been railroaded by agenda-driven scaremongering, when what we desperately need is logic, innovation and collaboration (NSW Minerals Council, 2007).

Rising Tide Australia subverted this campaign by producing its own satirical web-based counter-campaign, entitled "*Climate change, Rising Sea Levels, Propaganda: Brought to you by mining*", depicting images on a website with a similar name and a format similar to the Minerals Council promotions, but showing climate chaos events such as the impacts of sea level rise. The NSW Minerals Council contacted the group's web host within 24 hours and forced them to take down the site for breach of copyright. However, Rising Tide Australia persisted with the campaign despite the threats, and found an overseas web host for its images (Corderoy, 2007).

On April 1 2008 (Fossil Fools Day), Rising Tide Australia drew attention to the link between the coal industry, climate change, non-sustainable consumer lifestyles in a banner-drop from the Westfield shopping complex in Kotara, Newcastle. During the protest and in subsequent media exposure Rising Tide drew attention to these issues. Firstly, Rising Tide asserted that Australian consumerism leaves Australia with a trade imbalance that is offset by expanding coal exports that prop up a non-sustainable local economy. The second issue highlighted was that consumer demand for cheap goods from China and India accelerates the construction of new coal-fired power stations in those countries in order to provide the necessary energy and thus contributes to climate change (Rising Tide Australia, 2008).

Climate justice groups have linked communities resisting coal mining and coal-fired power plants around the world, as well as working with communities in the Pacific and elsewhere threatened by displacement from climate change.

Rising Tide Australia has provided support to representatives of communities fighting coal mines, power stations and threatened by displacement as climate refugees. These include activists fighting mountain top coal mining in Appalachia in the US the Phulbari open-cut coal mine in Bangladesh, and the Map Ta Phut power station in Thailand. Awareness tours have also been organised for activists from the Carteret Islands, Papua New Guinea, one of the first Pacific communities threatened with displacement from their homelands because of rising sea levels.

The global climate justice movement is an essentially informal network of activists and organisations, but nonetheless shares learning about linked impacts of climate change, and coordinate political strategies targeting corporate and government decision-makers.

In April 2010, two Rising Tide Australia activists attended the World Peoples Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, held in Cochabamba, Bolivia. The conference was described as:

A rare example of social movements and the state collectively articulating radical discourses to be inserted into international arenas such as the UNFCCC and the COP process. The space, organisation and infrastructure were provided by the government and the demands and the content, to a reasonable extent, came from below (Building Bridges Collective, 2010: 57)

While in Bolivia, the Rising Tide Australia activists visited Indigenous communities where the climate change links between the Australian coal economy and the rapid retreat of snowfields that feed water supplies that subsistence farmers rely on for water were highlighted. Rising Tide Australia activists have used the image in Figure 5 (below), to help alert people in Australia of the consequences of Australia's coal economy.

Figure 4: Global Climate Justice Inks Between Hunter Valley Coal and Bolivian Water Supply



(Photo courtesy: Rising Tide Australia, 2010)

The World Peoples Conference on Climate Change at Cochabamba generated some pressure for change. The Government of Bolivia put forward the demands of the Conference at UN-sponsored climate negotiations held in Tianjin, China in October 2010 and in Cancun, Mexico in December 2010.

The negotiating text adopted at Tianjin included some proposals from Cochabamba, including no new carbon markets, respect for human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples and climate migrants, formation of an International Climate Justice Tribunal, 6% of GDP in developed

countries to finance climate change actions in developing countries, and lifting of barriers to technology transfer. However, these features were not supported at Cancun and the Bolivian Government subsequently complained that the negotiating text systematically excluded the voices from the Cochabamba Conference. However, the Bolivian Government pledged to continue to struggle alongside affected communities worldwide until climate justice is achieved (Government of Bolivia, 2010).

Conclusion

Climate justice activists are justifiably doubtful that corporations, national governments, or United Nations processes will address the roots causes of climate change, provide adequate compensation for historical debt, or fundamentally drive the transition to ecologically and socially-sustainable energy systems.

However, civil society disturbances, such as those organised by Rising Tide Australia, are among many local disruptions to the exercise of power and profit-taking by global corporations that reverberate from local to global scales. If they were isolated events in one country they would have very little impact, but they are part of a growing global social movement that supports, gives voice to, and empowers vulnerable communities that would otherwise be isolated and silenced in their displacement. The militant actions of the climate justice movement lets decision-makers in governments and industry see that global outrage is growing and that the social licence of fossil fuels industries is under threat.

While the climate justice movement is still weak compared to the power of transnational corporations and governments, the movement has disrupted business-as-usual for global energy corporations and governments perpetuating fossil fuel dependency in the Hunter Valley and beyond. The movement is opening up new spaces for political action, capturing public attention and undermining the coal industry's social license to operate.

The following cartoon by the *Newcastle Herald's* resident cartoonist, Peter Lewis, (Figure 6) shows how Rising Tide Australia has attained a David-and-Goliath capacity to disturb the coal industry's profit-making activities.

Figure 5: Rising Tide disrupts business-as-usual in the world's largest coal export port



(Cartoon courtesy: Peter Lewis, *Newcastle Herald*, 27/9/2010)

Through grassroots organising of disruptive and powerfully symbolic actions across local and global scales that expose and challenge injustice, the climate justice movement confronts corporate power and the hegemony of the fossil fuel industry. Exemplified by organisations such as Rising Tide Australia, the movement establishes new political sites of struggle and builds new forms of participatory democracy.

The climate justice movement indicates the emergence of a radical movement for a globally equitable and ecologically sustainable alternative to corporate rule and growth-addicted economic systems that jeopardise the health of the planet, people and all species.

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