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Director
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14 September 2021

Dear Mr Badman and Dr Rössler

Re: Potential water quality and climate change impacts to the Great Barrier Reef

We write to you as representatives of Australia's non-governmental environmental organisations with a significant interest in the protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. We extend our gratitude for UNESCO and IUCN's work to ensure the protection of the Great Barrier Reef and look forward to the forthcoming Reactive Monitoring Mission.

In advance of the Mission, we write to you in relation to our serious concerns about a proposed coal mine in Central Queensland, on the doorstep of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area property (GBR). The Central Queensland Coal (CQC) mine is proposed only 10 kms from the GBR.

The CQC project proposes to dig two large open cut mines in low-lying flood prone land located between two creeks which drain directly into the GBR. In addition to the greenhouse gas emissions generated during the operation of the mine and subsequent burning of the 10 million tonnes of thermal and coking coal, the project is also predicted to release up to 2,930 million litres of mine affected water into local creeks during very wet conditions. Water pollution from the mine will flow directly into the GBR and will be contrary to the water quality targets set out in the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP), which sets a target for no net increase in sediment transport in the Styx River catchment (where this mine is proposed to be located).

In 2020, the Australian Government appointed Independent Expert Scientific Committee (IESC) handed down a [damning assessment of the project](#), saying it threatened to cause “significant and irreversible impacts” to the GBR and other significant ecosystems and species. Specific to water quality, the IESC was concerned about the impacts of controlled and uncontrolled water discharges and the disturbance of sodic soils which are prone to erosion and would potentially increase sediment loads entering the GBR. As you are aware, meeting water quality targets is important to preserve the Reef’s Outstanding Universal Value as a World Heritage property.

In April 2021, the Queensland Government, through the Department of Environment and Science, released its [Assessment Report](#) and deemed the mine ‘not suitable to proceed’ because of ‘unacceptable risks’ to the Great Barrier Reef and surrounding environments including a Dugong Sanctuary and Queensland’s largest declared Fish Habitat Area. We believe that this is the first time that the Queensland Government has refused a coal mine application.

The final decision now sits with the Australian Environment Minister Sussan Ley. It has been with the Australian Government since April 2021 and yet despite the advice of independent scientists and the Queensland Government, the decision has not yet been determined.

The International Energy Agency has [warned](#) against any new fossil fuel projects if the world is to reach net zero emissions by 2050 and to have an even chance of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C. Extracting and burning coal from the CQC mine will *increase* fossil fuel emissions and exacerbate climate change which has been acknowledged by the Australian Environment Minister as the greatest threat to the survival of the Great Barrier Reef. The approval of this mine would contravene the World Heritage Committee’s Decision ([44 COM 7B.90](#)) that urges Australia to enact “*accelerated action at all possible levels [which] is required to address the threat from climate change, in accordance with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015)*”.

The scientific evidence is clear. Approving an open cut coal mine so close to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area will risk direct impacts to the GBR and will contribute to increased greenhouse gas emissions fuelling accelerated climate change.

We request that you advise the Australian Environment Minister about our concerns regarding the Central Queensland Coal Project, seek her assurance that she has heeded the advice of your organisations and that this project will not proceed due to the likely significant impact on the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. We would also like to take this opportunity to request to meet with the Reactive Monitoring Mission members during the visit to Australia and the GBR.

Kind regards,



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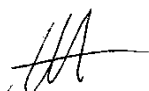
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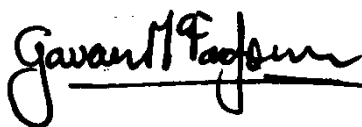
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