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MEDIA RELEASE

COAL WILL NOT BE KING IN TOWNSVILLE

North Queensland Conservation Council deplores plans by Guildford Coal to open up coal-mining in the region, and possibly export coal through the Port of Townsville.

In commenting on reports that the development would help North Queensland 'strike it rich' and create 'massive economic benefits for the region', NQCC Coordinator Wendy Tubman listed a few salient facts.

"The highly capital-intensive coal industry is a very small employer, as recognised by Goldman Sachs Australia chief economist Tim Toohey. This would not generate great employment for the region.

"The consultants for Clive Palmer's proposed China First Mine noted that, if that mine were to go ahead ' 3,000 jobs will be lost across Queensland and Australia, particularly in manufacturing, agriculture and tourism'.

"The resources boom has created a 'two-speed' economy and had a negative impact on other sectors, particularly those affected by the record high exchange rate which has been driven by the resources industry, particularly coal.

"The 'upgrading' of rail lines would have a negative impact on agricultural land and on the environment.

"The growth in use of coal and the resulting exacerbation of climate change is the number one threat to the Great Barrier Reef. The Australian Institute of Marine Science, based in Townsville, has found that coral cover has halved in the last 27 years and now is just 13.8% of what it was.

"The NSW government has recently announced an inquiry into the health and environmental impacts of coal dust around the coal-mining and exporting area of Newcastle. There is evidence showing serious negative health impacts on mine workers and the communities surrounding the coal mines.

"The community now realises that a few extra dollars for a few people is not worth the risk to Australia's lifestyle and the Great Barrier Reef - especially when we are talking about the dying, unnecessary and highly subsidized industry that is the coal industry. I think Guildford Coal will find that it has a fight on its hands."

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