



# Community Dialogues on Coal

A listening tour of Queensland's coal affected communities



**Friends of  
the Earth  
Brisbane**

**6°**

SIX DEGREES  
Coal & Climate  
Campaign

# Introduction

Queensland is Australia's quarry. It is impossible to ignore the historical role that coal production and export has played in the economic and social development of this state. Through the nineteenth century, coal provided a source of reliable, low-cost and cost-effective energy, which provided the foundation for the international competitiveness of Queensland industry. The contribution of the coal industry to state government revenue does much to underpin the high standard of living in Queensland that most enjoy and many take for granted.

At the same time, coal is the most greenhouse-gas-intensive of all of the fossil fuels and the leading cause of climate change worldwide. As the largest coal exporting state in the largest coal exporting country in the world, the state of Queensland is literally at the 'coal face' of the tough decisions on climate change. On the one hand, coal is the state's leading export commodity, and historically a major factor in the economic health of the state. On the other, the industry more than doubles Australia's contribution to dangerous climate change.

The coal industry in Queensland is entering a period of enormous uncertainty and risk, with continuing job losses, shrinking global demand, and massive sector-wide restructures due to climate change policy responses.

In all this, it is the people of Queensland's coal communities who will have to deal with the very real impacts of this period of transition. It is time for a serious and sober dialogue in this state about the role that coal plays in our future prosperity and in the way we respond to climate change. We hope that this report can begin to inform that dialogue.

## SIX DEGREES

**Six Degrees** is a campaign initiative of Friends of the Earth Brisbane Co-op Ltd. The Six Degrees campaign works with communities and groups across the state to reduce Queensland's dependence on the coal industry, and to ensure a just and measured transition to a safe climate future.

**Friends of the Earth** is a community based social change co-operative working on local, regional, national and international issues. We are working towards the creation of an ecologically sustainable and socially just society through community action.

# About the Listening Tour

In recognition of the importance in gaining a better understanding of the range people's attitudes in the coal communities of Queensland, Six Degrees undertook the **Coal Communities Listening Tour** over two weeks in November, 2008.

The Coal Communities Tour was an engagement and consultation project with members of coal dependant and affected communities. It sought to ground the dialogues about Queensland's coal and energy futures, in a thorough and robust knowledge of the concerns, issues and needs of these communities.

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*Above all, the tour was about listening.*

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It was based on the recognition that in the expansion of infrastructure and development to sustain the coal industry in Queensland, local interests and concerns with the effects of this expansion tend to be seen as less important than corporate, state and economic interests. The ongoing expansion of the coal industry will have significant environmental, social and economic impacts on the people of these regions, particularly those in which the mining industry is in an exploratory phase and is yet to be developed. Increasingly, however, such expansion occurs with little to no regard for the concerns and issues of directly affected citizens, whose voices are often excluded from consideration – regarded as secondary, incidental or even irrelevant.

Six Degrees initiated the Coal Communities Tour to redress this imbalance – an attempt to genuinely bridge the gap between government, business, climate campaigners and community by listening to the issues and concerns of affected community stakeholders, without judgment or debate.

Six Degrees travelled to selected coal regions of Queensland to get a better understanding of what people in these regions (including government and mining companies) know about climate change, the coal industry and the impacts of both on their lifestyles, livelihoods and futures.

As part of a commitment to active citizen democracy, we wanted to compile and communicate the issues, values and aspirations of these communities as part of the dialogue in Queensland on food, energy and environmental security.

## What is a Listening Tour?

The origins of a listening tour as a means of furthering community engagement and citizen activism is sometimes traced to Herb Walters, a peace activist in a group called Rural Southern Voice for Peace in the United States.

In 1986, Walters initiated a Listening Project in response to the fact that many of the people involved with peace activism were isolated, alienated or in conflict with important members of their communities.

30 peace activists visited the homes of people in their community, and listened to their thoughts and feelings about the presence of nuclear weapons at a local submarine base.

Through Walters' Listening Project, the activists were able to break down many of the entrenched barriers between themselves, other residents and military personnel who were working at the naval base.

However the concept of a listening tour draws from a longer and richer tradition. In particular, many of the members of Six Degrees involved in the tour drew inspiration from the Freedom Rides that took place in Australia in 1964 and 1965. Students from Sydney University travelled through country towns of New South Wales to learn more about the experiences of Aboriginal people and the racial divide in rural Australia. The Freedom Ride was led by Charles Perkins, and drew inspiration from similar tours by civil rights activists throughout the United States of America.

Queensland, too, has a history of listening projects around contentious community issues. In 1992, a listening project was initiated by community activists in Ravenshoe in the Atherton Tableland. In this case, the activists wanted to provide clarity and understanding to people involved in a community conflict about the establishment of the Tully-Millstream Hydro Electricity project.

In 2002, Friends of the Earth Brisbane and ENUFF (Everyone for a Nuclear Free Future) organised a community listening project in Narangba – the site of a nuclear irradiation facility to the north of Brisbane. Here the purpose was not only to get a better understanding of the community's concerns and issues about the plant, but also to establish dialogue between members of the community and the activists who would later be part of a long-standing protest encampment on the proposed site.

Drawing from the aims and objectives of preceding listening projects and community tours, the primary objectives of the Coal Communities Listening Tour were to:

- Open up spaces for dialogue and consensus-building to create better connections with individuals and groups in coal affected communities, particularly those working on local campaigns opposed to coal infrastructure expansion;
- Build our own awareness, understanding and empathy for the impacts and effects of coal development on affected communities; and
- Highlight the importance and role of active listening in building community, resolving conflict and in working together towards a safe climate future.



**“This town wasn’t dying. But it is now. Xstrata are buying out families and they are moving from the district. The town is now smaller, but we aren't seeing the positive impacts. We're in limbo. People love the town as it is.”**

Wandoan community member



## Regional Vulnerability

Communities respond to threats and opportunities in vastly different and often unpredictable ways. Attempting to understand community and individual responses to changing circumstances is a key area of study for social science research. One method that is increasingly used is to look at a particular community's vulnerability versus its 'capacity for change'.

Prior to the tour, researchers from Six Degrees conducted an analysis of the vulnerability and transition capacity of Queensland's regions in relation to coal using confluence mapping techniques. For each region of Queensland, we developed an index of their dependence on the coal industry, and the community resilience to changes to the industry.

To assess coal dependence, we used indicators such as the contribution of coal to the regional economy, the proportion of its labour force, and future mining potential in the area. To assess community resilience, we mapped the economic resources, landscape opportunities, the regional skill-base, socio-economic advantage, and levels of voluntarism. Through this, we were able to specify the priority areas for the tour.

For Six Degrees, the priority areas were those identified as having high dependence on coal, and also high community resilience. These were the regions, we decided, that would be most likely candidates for the pilot of a just transition strategy.



## THE QUEENSLAND COAL INDUSTRY

### COAL PRODUCTION

In 2008, the state's 54 coal mines produced a record 188 million tonnes of coal. We are a major player in the international coal market, with Queensland coal exports accounting for some 20% of the global trade.

The industry generated \$22.6 billion in export revenue and is expected to generate \$3.22 billion in royalty revenues for the state government for 2008-09. Royalties from coal account for around 8.7% of total anticipated income of the Queensland Government for the 2008-2009 financial year.

### COAL EXPORTS

Around 85% of Queensland coal is exported.

Queensland supplies around 45% of coking coal to the world market and 6% of global trade in thermal coal. Coal exports from Queensland are roughly equal to those of Canada, the USA and China combined.

Queensland exports to 33 countries worldwide, with major consumers Japan (24%), India (12%) and Korea (8%), which combined accounts for 45% of Queensland coal sales.

### COAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The coal industry is Queensland's leading contributor to climate change. The greenhouse footprint generated by the burning of Queensland's coal amounts to around 394 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year.

To put this in perspective, these emissions are 2.3 times the combined domestic emissions for the entire state, which stood at 170.9 million tonnes in 2006, and included power generation, transport, agriculture and industry.

Additionally, the mining, processing and transportation of coal all contribute enormously to greenhouse gas production.

Another way of thinking about the emissions from Queensland coal is to consider how it compares with other strategies to reduce climate change emissions. For instance, the annual greenhouse gas reductions from changing 20 million light bulbs from a 60-watt incandescent light bulb to a compact fluorescent is completely negated by the emissions of the Queensland coal industry in just 32 hours. Or, taking every registered vehicle in Australia off the road for a whole year would be equivalent of shutting down the coal industry for just 47 days.

## THE EXPANSION PLANS FOR THE QUEENSLAND COAL INDUSTRY

Under current expansion plans, the Queensland Government is looking to more than double our coal production and exports by 2030. At the official opening of the \$780 million expansion to Gladstone's R.G. Tanna Terminal in July 2008, Premier Anna Bligh announced her target of 370 million tonnes in export annually in 20 years. Even at conservative estimates, this expansion will emit an additional 460 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere – equivalent to the annual emissions of 65 average coal-fired power stations.

The Government has committed \$15.6 billion of public funds to provide the infrastructure required to meet the needs of the Queensland coal industry over the next 20 years under the Coal Infrastructure Plan.

Amongst these investments, the Government is supporting the expansion of existing coal rail lines and all of the five major coal ports. In addition, plans are underway for two new rail lines and the construction of a new coal terminal on Wiggins Island, which will make Gladstone the second largest coal port in world.

There are currently 18 new mines in various stages of development around the state.

## How was the tour done?

At each of the towns, volunteers from Six Degrees established listening posts in public spaces to engage local residents in conversations around the issues of climate change and the coal industry.

Each of the volunteers had undergone training in active listening and in strategic questioning prior to the tour and had participated in a pilot run in the town of Ipswich.

At the listening posts, the volunteers actively listened to residents' ideas, concerns, feelings and perspectives. Strategic questions designed to encourage participants to think and reflect more deeply were used as prompts.

Information from these conversations was recorded and each listener kept a personal journal of their conversations. In the evenings, the volunteers gathered the records of their conversations and communicated back what they had heard via an open public meeting. At these meetings, participants were able to question and clarify what the volunteers had found and to provide further information.

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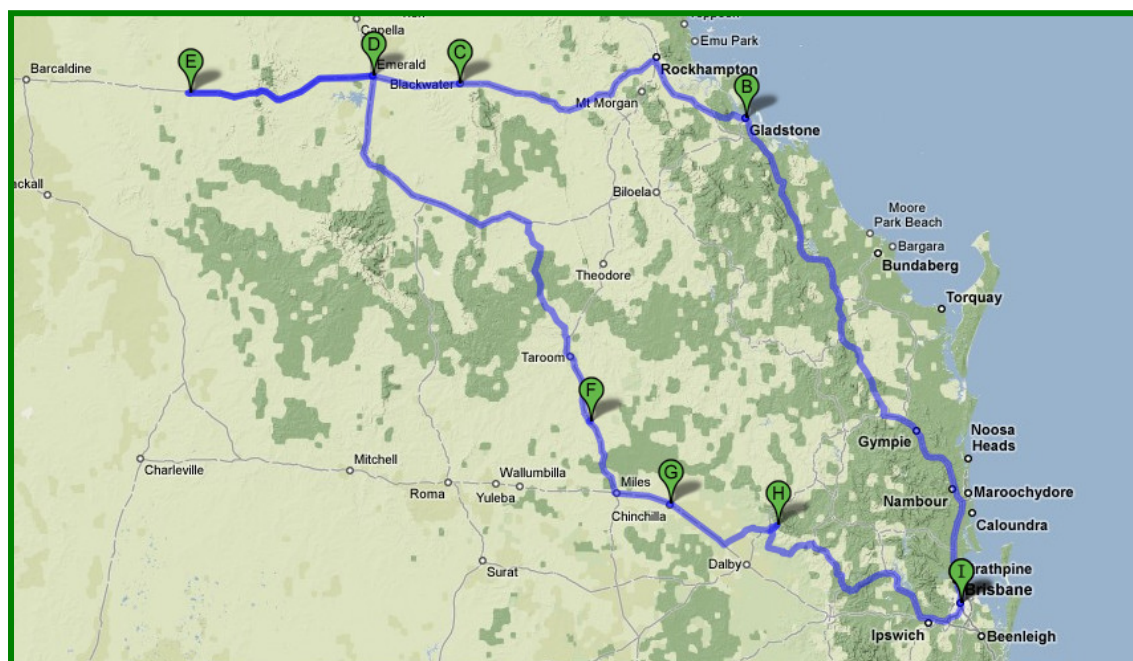
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**Right now, we need to weigh up the cost of money versus death. Scientists are saying this and that, and it can be really confusing. All I know is that it's dead, brown, sad. It's going to be catastrophic and we need to wake up.**

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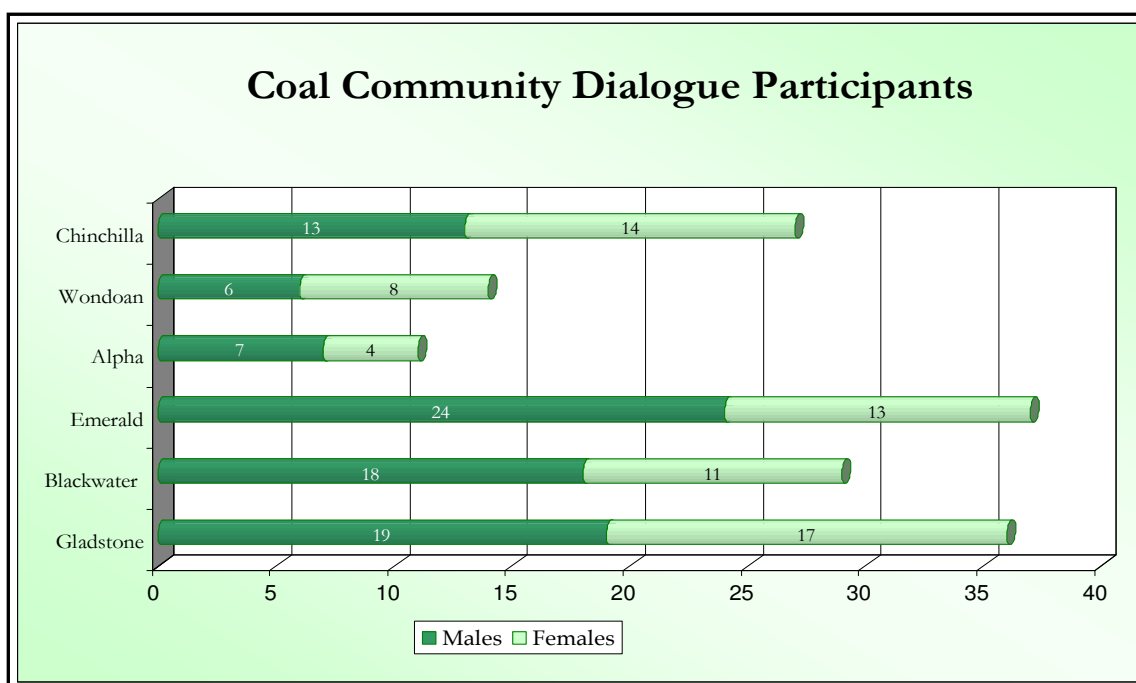
Gladstone community member



The tour travelled to around 2,200kms to six locations across Queensland: Gladstone, Blackwater, Emerald, Alpha, Wandoan, and Chinchilla.

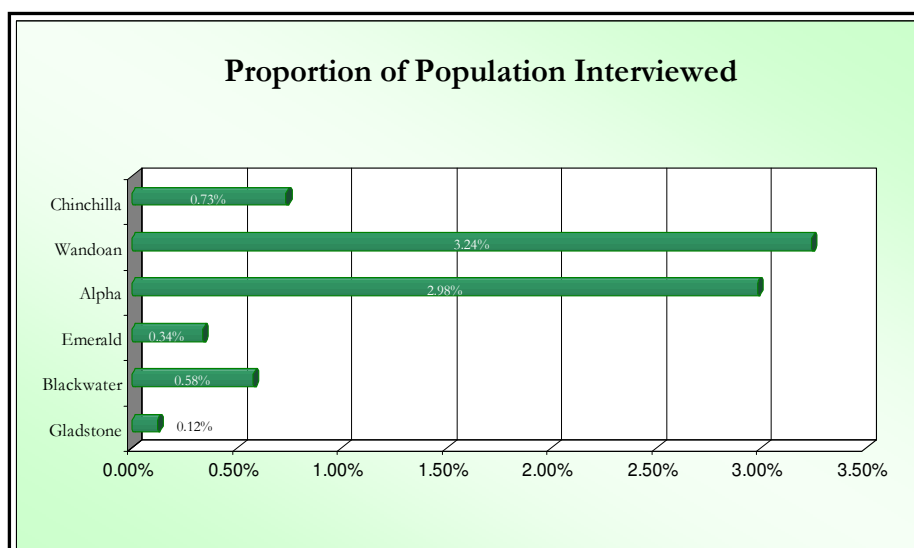
# The Coal Dialogues

Over the course of the two weeks, **154 people** from a wide diversity of backgrounds took part in the Coal Community Dialogues. In each of the locations, we made sure that we had a spread across a range of ages, demographics and employment. Overall, the ages of participants ranged from 15-30 (30%), 31-45 (23%), 46-60 (21%) and older than 60 (25%). Effort was made to match the number of participants with the size of the population. In Wandoan and Alpha, almost as many as one in thirty people from the area participated in the dialogues (2.98% of the population and 3.24% of the population respectively).



**“I get migraines and headaches from coal dust. It makes me sick. I choke up. I can smell it in the air.”**

Gladstone community member





# Issues and Concerns

Every conversation started the same way: with the question “what are some of the issues that concern you the most?” Not surprisingly, this open-ended question generated an array of diverse responses. From the perspective of Six Degrees, we wanted to get a sense of what mattered most to the participants, not how they felt about what mattered most to us.

It became clear to us in the analysis of the information that it was important to distinguish between those towns with an established coal industry (Gladstone, Blackwater and Emerald), and those where the coal industry is in more of a development or prospective stage (Alpha, Wandoan and Chinchilla). These were referred to as “established” and “establishing” regions. The variation in the issues, concerns and attitudes towards coal between these two categories is illustrative of the range of ways in which coal is understood and experienced in Queensland.

Regardless of location, the issue of access to services and health was a common concern across all the coal communities. The top ten issues, and some sample responses, are provided in the table below.

## STRATEGIC QUESTIONS ON THE COAL INDUSTRY

- What are some of the issues that concern you the most?
- What community organisations do you belong to?
- What role does coal play in your life? In your community?
- What would you say the impacts of the coal industry are on you? On the community?
- What are some of the benefits of the coal industry?
- What are some of your concerns with the coal industry?
- How do these concerns make you feel?

Issue	%	Sample responses
<i>Access to services</i>	12.8%	Communication, transport, recreation, youth services, childcare, retail diversity, emergency services, access to tradespeople.
<i>Environment</i>	10.9%	Air quality, coal dust, noise pollution, drought, animal welfare, coastal impacts, landscape degeneration.
<i>Personal issues</i>	10.4%	Financial, health, family, circumstantial, sporting team performance, dinner.
<i>Health</i>	10.4%	Rates of leukaemia, heart disease and respiratory illness, hospital staff, waiting lists and health resources, dental.
<i>Economy</i>	7.3%	Interest rates, fuel prices, cost of living, impacts on utilities prices.
<i>Welfare</i>	6.7%	Social security, justice, poverty, discrimination, economic disparity, alcoholism.
<i>Employment</i>	6.7%	Access to labour, jobs for partners, retention in agriculture, job security, youth, transient work population.
<i>Agricultural viability</i>	5.5%	Food security, land acquisition, commodity prices, long-term rehabilitation.
<i>Housing</i>	4.3%	Affordability and availability of sale and rental properties.
<i>Climate</i>	3.6%	Climate change, global warming, emissions.

Some of the important issues that were raised by participants, which did not make the top ten also included: water (both in terms of quality & quantity), crime, isolation, the impacts of infrastructure expansion, population growth and decline, equality and education.

### **Differences between Established and Establishing Coal Communities**

In comparing the top ten issues in the established and establishing coal communities, there are a number of significant variations. Environmental issues, such as air quality, coal dust, noise pollution and landscape degradation, were the most cited concerns of communities in established coal communities, but were a comparatively low concern for those areas where coal is yet to be mined or transported. Similarly water issues and climate issues rank high on the list of concerns in coal towns, but not in the establishing communities.

In the communities where coal is in a prospective stage of development, community members are more likely to be concerned with health and welfare issues, and to a lesser extent, the provisions of infrastructure. Many of their key concerns are directly related to the establishment of the industry itself. Issues relating to agricultural viability in the region and food security in general, for example, are a direct consequence of the encroachment of mines and mineral processing facilities on premier quality and highly productive agricultural landscapes. In the same way, the community concerns with crime and security were frequently associated with the influx of a transient workforce associated with mining and exploration, who participants felt were eroding the levels of trust amongst members of the community.

**“Housing and land prices have already increased. What used to be \$25,000 now is \$425,000. People bought the bakery, cafe & drapery on the proviso that coal was coming. But then they closed them, waiting for better business opportunities.”**

*Alpha community member*

## **THE TOP TEN ISSUES**

### **Established Coal Communities**

1. ENVIRONMENT
2. ACCESS TO SERVICES
3. PERSONAL ISSUES
4. HEALTH
5. ECONOMY
6. EMPLOYMENT
7. HOUSING
8. WATER
9. WELFARE
10. CLIMATE

### **Establishing Coal Communities**

1. ACCESS TO SERVICES
2. HEALTH
3. WELFARE
4. PERSONAL ISSUES
5. AGRICULTURAL VIABILITY
6. CRIME AND SECURITY
7. ECONOMY
8. EMPLOYMENT
9. ENVIRONMENT
10. INFRASTRUCTURE





# The Cost of the Coal Industry

Participants were given the opportunity to discuss their concerns with the negative impacts of the coal industry.

In aggregate, the environmental impacts of the coal industry (not including climate change) were overwhelming regarded as the most significant (17% of total responses). In fact, the second most frequently cited negative impact of the coal industry was also environmental – the coal dust (11.9%).

These two issues featured most prominently in Gladstone, where 1 in 3 participants mentioned coal dust and around 2 in 3 participants mentioned either the impacts of the dust or the air quality in the region.

Some of the other frequently identified impacts of the coal industry included: its impact on agricultural viability and productivity (10.3%); the disruption of community cohesion (9.3%); the effects of the transient population (6.7%); and the impact of the industry on housing prices and availability (6.2%).

Examining the negative impact of the coal industry in terms of aggregate responses, however, does not effectively capture the ways in which the impacts of the industry change over time, nor the cumulative impacts due to its prolonged presence in the community.

The variety of locations visited in the tour provided an opportunity to examine how these impacts vary across the stage of the industry.

In Chinchilla, where the industry is largely in an exploratory phase, the top three issues were agricultural productivity, the environmental impacts and the impacts associated with land acquisition respectively. Residents from Chinchilla expressed grave concerns about the effects of transforming productive landscapes into mines, not only in terms of personal livelihood, but also in terms of the future food security of the country. They expressed very little confidence in the capacity of the mining companies to rehabilitate lands after mining has occurred, particularly in regions of such rare productive quality.



By comparison, in Wandoan and Alpha, where long-standing agricultural properties have been purchased or are under option by coal companies, the issues were quite different. The feasibility of continuing agricultural productivity was still a major concern, but the social consequences of land acquisition, concurrent population decline, and the increasing presence of a transient workforce were notably more pressing

concerns. As families are put under increasing pressure to sell their properties, the breakdown of what had previously been strong social ties has damaging impacts within families, between neighbours, and right across the community. Due to the small and highly interdependent populations in these areas, the exodus of cornerstone members of the community caused by land acquisition undermines the continued viability of the town.

As described by one participant

in Wandoan, the social consequences are “gut-wrenching”.

In Emerald, coal mining is much more established and the effects of land acquisition and population decline are no longer felt as keenly within the community. However, economic polarization between the mining and non-mining

population has quite significant consequences. This is especially experienced in relation to the cost of living and housing affordability.

The experience of social polarisation in Emerald and to a lesser extent also in Alpha, is sometimes referred to in economics as “Dutch disease”. This concept is used to describe the relationship between expanding (and for coal, booming) natural resource

extraction and a corresponding decline in other sectors of the economy – particularly the agricultural sector. Not only does this have significant effects on the national economy, but it has very real and acutely experienced associated social impacts. An increase in revenues from natural resource extraction raises the local and regional exchange rate, which makes the other sectors less competitive and less viable. This has direct consequences for the availability of and access to labour and services.

According to participants, the mining town of Blackwater has a high degree of environmental problems, especially dust, water pollution, subsidence and landscape scale degradation. Concerns were raised with regards to worker health and safety, particularly in relation to long shifts, as well as the impact that this work regime has on families. As with most mining regions in Australia, housing availability is a major issue.

In the industrial town of Gladstone the impacts of the coal industry are quite different. Environmental impacts extend to include coastal issues, for example. But the three most prevalent concerns in Gladstone were coal dust, air quality, and the effects of the coal and other industries in the region on health. Participants identified exceedingly high rates of leukaemia, heart disease and respiratory illness amongst the community as cause for considerable concern. Inappropriate monitoring and reporting of air quality was often identified, and residents of Gladstone want scientific analysis of the effects of the coal dust on human health and the environment.

In all locations the lack of government or industry intervention or assistance was a major cause for concern. For the residents participating, this emphasised both their isolation from decision-making and lack of political power, and many felt that this was indicative of a prevailing attitude of the government towards the region in general. Given the extent of the state revenue produced from the coal regions in

comparison with the urban centres, this was seen to be grossly inequitable.

Some of the key learnings for the volunteers from Six Degrees were the scale of the social and ecological impacts of the coal industry, quite in addition to climate change. In terms of the costs of the coal industry, and its current expansion into agricultural regions, very few participants listed climate change as an issue.

Another important learning is the way in which the impacts of the industry change over time. In areas where the coal industry is pursuing a vigorous program of exploration and development, communities are often required to make complex decisions about the future of the region's development pathway. In many cases, communities experience a high degree of divergence between competing visions, and often with significant opposition between visions of environmental preservation and the promised path of economic development through the coal industry. Understanding the impacts of the industry over time will enable us to better inform communities and regions facing these scenarios. In turn we can support them to make better decisions based not only on industry promises, but also on the shared experiences of communities who are now dealing with the consequences.

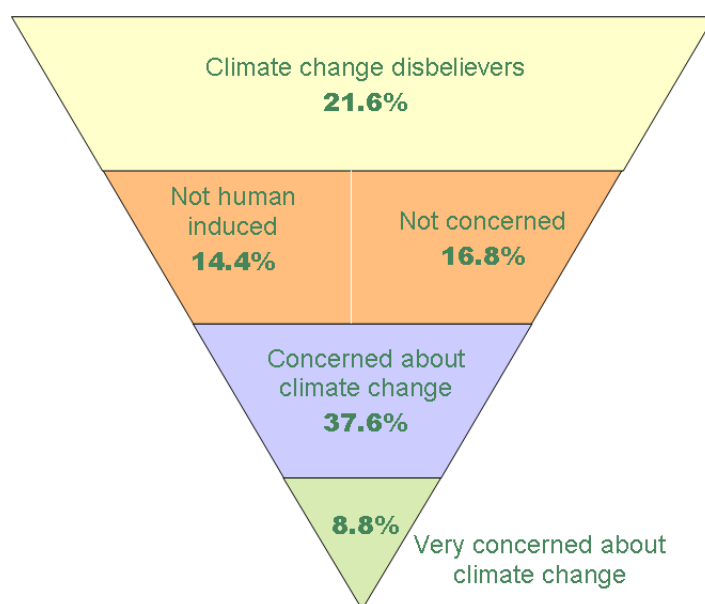
## Attitudes towards Climate Change

Participants were asked a series of questions in relation to climate change, including what they knew about it, what their level of concern was, where they had gotten their information about climate change and what sources of information they trusted.

They were also asked what they saw as the connections between climate change and coal.

Overall, it was clear from the responses that climate change is not considered a priority issue in the coal communities we visited. Only 4.8% of participants identified it as one of their key concerns, and only 7.3% regarded it as a negative impact of the coal industry.

On the other hand, 21.6% did not believe climate change was occurring, and 14.4% of participants did not believe it was human induced. Of the people who did believe that climate change was occurring as a result of human activity, 16.8% were not concerned.







## THE BENEFITS OF THE COAL INDUSTRY

Across the board, the benefits of the coal industry identified by participants in the coal dialogues were employment and jobs (34.6% of responses) and the local flow-on economic benefits (23.9%). The coal industry was also seen to provide benefits in terms of community development (8.1%), especially in Emerald. Sponsorship of community activities such as sport, arts, charities and direct contribution to community health were ways that participants saw the coal industry as providing benefits that were not available to the area without coal investment. The contribution that coal made to the national economy (7.3%) was also identified as a significant benefit. This was typically a source of pride, especially in the established industry regions, where coal was seen to be the backbone of Australia's economic advantage.

Some of the regional variations in response to this question are interesting to consider. In Alpha, the single most important benefit from the coal industry was ensuring the continuing viability of the town. People talked of coal “revitalising” Alpha – of “livening up the town”, “keeping the town alive” and “bringing life to Alpha”. Many of the hopes for improving access to services in Alpha, such as a resident doctor, roads and sewerage upgrades and a high school, were pinned to the establishment of mining.

In the established coal towns of Gladstone and Blackwater, participants talked of coal in terms of identity – both their personal identity and the identity of the town. “This is a coal town. The world is starving for energy, and we’re the only ones who can provide it.” In contrast, none of the participants from Alpha, Wandoan or Chinchilla saw coal in quite this way.

Despite the identified benefits of coal in employment terms, the actual contribution of the coal industry to the Queensland labour force is quite low. According to statistics from the Queensland Department of Mines and Energy, the coal industry directly employed around 19,200 people at the close of 2008. However, due to support industries and indirect jobs, many regions and communities in Queensland remain almost totally dependant on the coal industry as a source of employment and as a catalyst for the growth of industry and service sectors in regional Queensland. To put the employment numbers in perspective, the total coal mining workforce of Queensland is about 4,000 less than the number of people who work at Target Department stores in Australia.



## MEASURING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

One of the questions we asked in all of the conversations was whether they participated in any community groups or organisations in the region. From our perspective, this was a way of gauging the level of engagement people had in the life of their communities – a key indicator of community vitality and long-term viability.

In the established coal communities, around 1 in 5 of the people we spoke with (19.6%) were active members of community organizations. This proportion is very similar to the level of community participation for both Queensland as a whole (18.4%) and regional Queensland (20.5%) as recorded in the 2006 Population Census.

What was surprising, though, was that about 42% of the people we spoke to in areas with an establishing coal industries were volunteers in their community.

Groups ranged from sporting groups, to Landcare, to the local RSL, to the Show Society, the rural fire brigade, P&Cs, Lifeline and progress associations.

This extraordinarily high level of community engagement has a number of implications when considered in light of the expansion of the coal industry.

There is a much higher degree of reliance upon community members to voluntarily supplement social services in those areas at risk of coal development. Also, many of the active community members we spoke with were involved in several groups or organizations. This is generally the case in smaller towns with an established population – there is a high degree of civic responsibility and commitment to maintaining the life of the community.

But this in turn means that as land is acquired and population declines, there is a much greater and disproportionate cost to the community due to the declining provision of services. This was clearly emphasised by one of the participants in Wandoan:

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***On nearly every property {Xstrata} are purchasing, either the husband or wife is very involved in the community. Xstrata won't volunteer. It will be devastating for the school bus runs, postie runs, and everything else. People just won't be there any more. It will devastate the school.***

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## CLIMATE QUICK STATS

**4.8%** Percentage of people who saw climate change as one of their main concerns

**7.3%** Percentage of people who saw climate change as one of the negative impacts of the coal industry

**37.3%** Percentage of people who made the connection between coal and climate change in the course of the conversation

## Conclusion

**Climate change is but one of the costs of Queensland's coal industry.**

The Coal Communities Listening Tour was more about dialogue than it was about data. Although the members of Six Degrees who participated in the project learned much about the values, the issues and concerns of the people of Queensland coal towns, what was perhaps more valuable was the building of spaces of dialogue, for sharing of stories, and for the building of real experiences of empathy and understanding. This is invaluable for campaigners and activists working for the achievement of climate justice.

Although the Six Degrees campaign is primarily about climate change, we learned that climate change is not considered a priority issue in coal communities. Against this, we found that the issues and challenges confronting coal communities, quite aside from climate change, are diverse and very serious. Although the participants in the dialogue recognised the value of the coal industry in terms of jobs and flow-on economic benefits, there was a very real sense the costs of the industry borne by the community have a threshold point.

The upshot is that the advantages brought to communities by the coal industry can be substituted by new industries which provide employment and revenue. There is little devotion to coal in itself, even in the regions where it has defined the very identity of the population.

Coal is very much considered an economic blessing, and a social and environmental curse. The impacts of the industry on the lived environment, health and well-being, community cohesion and economic viability are not being adequately addressed by government. There is a limit to the extent to which the people of Queensland's coal communities will be prepared to accept the trade-offs between their quality of life and the employment prospects provided by coal, particularly as these prospects become increasingly distant.



## THE LISTENING TOUR CREW

(left to right)

**Front Row:** Emily, Brad

**Second Row:** Shani, Kristy, Emma

**Third Row:** Hannah, Gemma, Paul

**Back Row:** Ellie

## ABOUT SIX DEGREES

**Six Degrees** is a campaign collective of Friends of the Earth Brisbane committed to addressing the root causes of climate change and reducing economic and political dependence on the coal industry in Queensland. We are made up of a diverse collective of researchers, community organisers and students.

**Six Degrees** formed in early 2008. We saw the need for a stronger link to be made between the localised campaigns against the expansion of the coal industry in Queensland and the broader climate movement.

Our campaign is grounded in the belief that broad-based community action is necessary to exert the political pressure needed to break the bond between the coal industry and the State Government.

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Our name **Six Degrees** represents for what lies ahead for all of us: both the immense challenges the earth is facing and the opportunities this presents for transformation. Six degrees is the worst case scenario predicted for global temperature increase this century: it's a trajectory we're still on and a future we are staring in the face. But six degrees also represents the interconnection between us all, non-human and human; six degrees of separation, between those on the frontline and those most responsible, between those just learning and those already coming together to forge alternatives and take action in solidarity with those affected. It is the six degrees of connection between those of us around the world who are working together for climate justice.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### Six Degrees

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### Online

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facebook – [www.tinyurl.com/sixde6rees](http://www.tinyurl.com/sixde6rees)  
twitter – [www.twitter.com/sixde6rees](http://www.twitter.com/sixde6rees)  
youtube – [www.youtube.com/sixde6rees](http://www.youtube.com/sixde6rees)