

## Indigenous people victims of 'green' fight against Adani mine, says Marcia Langton

*Academic uses mining industry lecture to accuse 'cashed-up green groups' of harming native title ambitions in campaign to stop Carmichael mine*



*Marcia Langton decried 'cashed-up green groups' which opposed mining projects based on 'flimsy' evidence. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP*

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Prominent Indigenous academic Marcia Langton has blasted the campaign against the controversial Adani coalmine, saying the Greens and the “environmental industry” are treating Indigenous people as “collateral damage”.

Langton used the Australian mining industry’s annual lecture in Melbourne on Wednesday night to argue the Greens and environmentalists had deliberately delayed native title legislation in the Australian parliament “in order to bolster their campaign against the Adani project”.

She accused recent governments of both political persuasions of ignoring constructive submissions about how to improve the native title system, and she said the environmental movement had hijacked the issue to help bolster the public case against mining.

“Let me be clear for those who are not aware of the problems we face: cashed-up green groups, some funded by wealthy overseas interests, oppose mining projects with often-

flimsy evidence and misrepresent the evidence to the public,” Langton said on Wednesday night.

“They deliberately thwart the aspirations and native title achievements of the majority of Indigenous people by deception, by persuading the media and the public that a small handful of Indigenous campaigners who oppose the legitimate interests of the majority of their own people, are the truth-tellers and heroes.”

Langton argues the recent delay to federal legislation addressing the McGlade decision was an example of the “environmental industry hijacking our most serious concerns, and in their own way, trying to return us to the pre-1992 era of terra nullius”.

The McGlade native title case found that an Indigenous land use agreement (Ilua) was invalid because not all Indigenous representatives had signed it.

In the wake of the shock court decision, the Turnbull government brought forward a bill amending the native title legislation to confirm the legal status of registered Iluas with a majority but not all the signatures of all claimants.

Langton argues the debate then became enmeshed in the public campaign against the controversial Carmichael coal mine, and the government proposal was labelled “the Adani bill, even while its status is not critical to the issue of the existing 120 or more Iluas over operating mines that have been invalidated by the McGlade decision.”

“The Green movement extremists and the media have misrepresented this very important, but mainly technical issue, in order to bolster their campaign against the Adani project.”

“That thousands of Indigenous people whose livelihoods depend on the validity of the Iluas has been completely ignored.”

Langton also criticised the government for being slow to take on board concerns expressed by Indigenous groups from Cape York, who have pressed for a range of amendments related to environmental conservation agreements, and the security of Aboriginal arrangements in those settlements.

During a Senate inquiry into the bill, the Cape York land council did not dispute certainty was required for Iluas post-McGlade, but it objected to the legislation because it provided blanket validation for all agreements.

The Cape York council urged the government to consider establishing a comprehensive claims settlement process to provide for the supervised conduct of negotiations, authorisation and settlement of agreements in the form of Iluas, under the national native title tribunal.

Langton said on Wednesday night necessary technical amendments to the government’s bill “were delayed by a series of objections and changes over the last two sittings of parliament”.

Langton says because of the failure to take on board concerns from Indigenous leaders in Cape York, and the delaying tactics of the anti-Adani campaigners, “the emergency legislation to overcome the paralysis of the agreements caused by the McGlade case will not be dealt with until the parliamentary sitting this month.”

She said there was no guarantee the Coalition and the Labor party would vote to pass the necessary technical amendments.

Langton also used the speech to argue the mining industry had played a positive role in training and employing Indigenous people, but she said automation in the sector would lead to significant job losses.

She said the industry needed to agree to “ambitious targets for Indigenous, low socio-economic and other population groups, to ensure that our nation avoids increasing the economic divide based on ability to perform in an increasingly automated workplace.”

“The right target is always parity, but getting there as we know, is difficult.”

“All Australians are vulnerable to the impacts of the fourth industrial revolution. The wasted potential that low levels of education represents will accelerate as Australia falls behind in producing an educated population that can compete in the new automated and digital global economy.”

“The loss of economic opportunity that this represents is a matter that is being measured and the signs are gloomy.”