

An Acceptable Obscenity: Adani Coal Giant Cultivates Queensland

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Region: [Oceania](#)

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Townsville.

The cicadas are studding the night with their sound, and occasionally, the curlews manifest with calls that string out a melody of mournful death. The reminder of Queensland, and certainly this part of the Australian state, is total.

As the dawn breaks, an election is being fought for the state, and its politicians are generally of one unchanging mind: Adani's Carmichael coal mine is good for Australia and Queenslanders, and ratepayers need to help.

A conspiracy of sorts has been made between Adani and various collaborators it has gotten on board, those individuals on the ground who have essentially become the commissioned harlots for the Indian giant down under.

The sense of Adani's generous largesse and mind swaying techniques have been evidenced by its extensive campaign to win over the relevant mayors of Queensland and the premier of the state. Rockhampton's **Mayor Margaret Strelow** received over \$1,600 in an assortment of hospitality gifts, which were recorded in the Rockhampton Regional Council's official register in April this year. (These officials have no problem sharing Adani's capacious bed of incentives.)

Another dipping into this pot of subsidised corruption is **Mayor Jenny Hill** of Townsville, who has decided that going with the mining momentum, however archaic and fictional it might be, is the way to go.

Her explanation to the 7.30 program on ABC is worth noting for its hair-tearing perverseness, its near gargoyle like disingenuousness. Not only was it fine to fund a billionaire with public money, it was also entirely appropriate to be corrupted in doing so. "We accepted a gift to fly to Mumbai to see their solar plant because are very keen to set up solar facilities in the north."

This, from a labour crippling poisoning coal giant keen to muddle along in crude extraction mode, demonstrates either the mayor's sense of moral arrested development, or Adani's stunning act of deeply penetrative seduction. Never mind the foreplay and the rough love: Adani has managed to convince politicians at the local level that they are worth it.

Both Councilor Strelow and Mayor Hill, it is worth noting, are bending over in grotesque contortion to assist Adani with using money that is not theirs (the good rate payers', in short) to fund a \$36 million airstrip at the proposed Carmichael coal mine. Neither seen a problem with their conduct.

The Townsville City Council, for instance, made their decision to supply \$18.5 million in shrouds of pure secrecy, refusing to seek consultation with public figures or groups. The explanation supplied was as crude as it was unsatisfactory: throwing such money at Adani was feasible given the savings achieved from the redundancies of 300 people.[1]

All, it seemed, was above board, including Adani's own gravy train of mayoral sponsorship. In Hill's words,

"I don't think there's an issue with that - it's been properly declared and the community can find out on our website." [2]

This is the sort of dizzying honesty that deserves a gold medal and a singular bullet, the latter to reassure the elector that such members should never reach mayoral office. They are happy to betray confidence and independence to a foreign despoiling entity in plain sight and expect resounding thanks.

There are voices noting the absurdity of the stance.

"Why does a billionaire," argues **Peter Newey**, convenor of Townsville Residents and Ratepayers Association with steely sensibility, "want two councils in Queensland to pay \$36 million for an airstrip?" As convenor of the Townsville Residents and Ratepayers Association, Newey insisted that Gautam Adani "would be able to afford at least two dozen of them and then gold plate them." [3]

Other local figures are simply concerned that such money could be well used to fund local infrastructure projects instead of coddling a mining monster.

"I despaired, to be honest," claimed a member of the city's city image committee, **Lucy Downes**, "because that money could have been used to reactive the CBD." [4]

An interesting sentiment that seems to come out is the sense of cleverness: the local, trough-skimming officials here are intent on making sure that they fawn and butter as long as they can, but still assure the "people", those sad estranged electors, that they have their backs. If Adani does not come good with their bank finance, the air strip is not going to happen.

Hill is particularly one who believes she can straddle two chairs and still claim a Zen-like balance. Embracing Adani and loving the environment are two fundamentally consistent principles in this muddled acquiescence. "We put extra regulation into areas like licensing requirements while rate payers up north pay to make sure our wastewater is handled in a way that won't hurt the Reef." [5] A perfect world, one that reconciles insatiable plunder with immaculate conservation.

Local councillors are acting as any councillor in any malnourished, post-colonial state would. They are up for purchase, and they are proud of it. To that end, there is no room to be smug, self-satisfied and exceptional here. Dictators rolling in the sponsorship of the US Central Intelligence Agency would have been envious.

This is Australia, where the term post-colonial suggests, and is loaded, with other meanings. Not, however, when it comes to a molesting, mine renting giant like Adani. That cap has been doffed, and local government is happy to fork out.

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Notes

[1] <https://www.change.org/p/billionaire-adani-doesn-t-need-townsville-ratepayers-gift-council-must-say-no>

[2] <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-30/adani-bought-india-flights-queensland-mayors-funding-airstrip/9100332>

[3] <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-01/adani-coal-mine-townsville-city-council-under-fire-over-airstrip/9103492>

[4] <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-01/adani-coal-mine-townsville-city-council-under-fire-over-airstrip/9103492>

[5] <http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/townsville-mayor-jenny-hill-hits-back-at-activists-planning-campaign-against-adanis-carmichael-mine/news-story/0ad8887d695283e611ad294d60d6f491>

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