

**A language and media psycho-analysis
of
Rhetoric and Propaganda**

**The Arrogance of
Wallarrah 2
Central Coast of NSW
(Wyong).**

**A submission to the
Planning Assessment Commission
Wallarrah 2 Coal Project - D482/17**

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Introduction:

It has become increasingly evident through research utilising the tools of psycho-analytics that political will and governance is being manipulated in Australia today by the increasing use of a linguistic paradigm that emphasises rhetoric, propaganda and dialect to sway public opinion. Historically, discussions involving impacts of development have been measured through the application of the language of such as Walt Whitman Rostow (1916-2003) who, through his Five Stages of Economic Growth, demonstrated how a dominant 18th century Eurocentric ideology could actually come to condone that a society could be destroyed so that another could be 'developed' in its place. This paper will argue it is evident that such language and thinking are still utilised today in an arrogant attempt to sell the proposition that, "economic progress is a necessary condition for some other purpose".

This paper therefore addresses how such arrogance destroys the fiduciary relationship between governance and the people. And how the people, being in a position of vulnerability, justifiably vest confidence, good faith, reliance and trust in their political leaders only to receive procrastination and vacillation instead of protection from the overwhelming pressuring of corporate thinking.

The Central Coast today:

*An, "abundance of seaside, sporting, recreational, family, holiday and natural attractions,[which] makes the Central Coast one of Australia's leading holiday destinations. It's become a rapidly developing urban region on the coastline north of Sydney and south of Lake Macquarie and Newcastle"*².

This description serves to encapsulate the mosaic that makes the Central Coast such a unique and inviting place. There exists on the Coast therefore an instinctive human demand that people stand united against any abuse of relation of confidence, undue influence, duress or coercion that threatens this legacy that has been created by and revered by generations of folk whom have made the Central Coast their home or, as in so many cases, their second home.

This demand is notable since, because of this internalisation, there has appeared a growing social imperative that before any major developmental changes are made to the Central Coast the people rally and form an appreciation of how such development may damage, effect or challenge this ambience the Central Coast has provided to generations of people.

So, it is this social imperative and appreciation that we must now speak about as it lies at the very heart of the many vocalisations that express discomfort with modernity or development in communities today.

The ambience of the Central Coast:

The importance of Ambience!

Because Ambience underpins an *initial impression* and because social justice demands good, lasting impressions, ambience not only acts to inform people it also provides the basis for emotional attachments. The impressions that people might gain about the Central Coast from its ambience thus become crucial *beliefs* about their emotional and social understanding of what the 'Central Coast' *means* to them as individuals. The difficulty that communities have with ambience is that as a *shared social construct* there exists an inherent fear that it may be impossible to create or recreate an emotional attachment if it is changed or lost due, in part, to the multiplicity and diversity of its functions. Given that the ambience of the Central Coast is the product of its social environment, social history and social expectation it is, unquestionably, the most potent influencer on the narrative that is the Central Coast.

We are also speaking here of the aesthetics of the Central Coast. Although the Coast is best known for its beaches and natural attractions, the Central Coast actually encompasses a network of sites with evidence of occupation by humans spanning more than 40,000 years. There is evidence abounding on the Central Coast that marks this interaction between numerous kinds of peoples and the Country rich in biological diversity. However, this evidence also marks the fragility that human exploitation brings with it as the long running fire at Wallarah 1, the mining subsidence damaging the road base along the M1, the communal concerns following the closures of local power stations and the memories of long term drought and water restrictions that haunt the Coast.

While this fragility and the tensions given birth to have faced the people of Australia from the earliest years as a nation. It is arrogance personified that people must still struggle to be heard as governments and industry combine their voices in order to silence the many demands of social and communal development and change that might stand against the ideological expectations of the economic imperative.

It becomes clear therefore, that this noisy debate over Wealth Creation and the resulting *costs* to the physical and social environments, which has so galvanised and divided the nation, continues. It is also notable that it was this debate that led to a defining attempt at writing the original inhabitants and owners of this country from the pages of history. So, it is now doubly unfortunate that the mining, extraction and energy industries and consecutive governments, both State and Federal, have failed to draw salutary lessons from this history. And such arrogance has meant that the language of the economic imperative become ever more strident as the fear mongering and the sense of wrong grew stronger and eventually breached the confidence within the public sphere.

The rhetoric:

“This project is set to provide extensive economic and social benefits to Wyong, the wider Central Coast Region and NSW communities through job creation and business opportunities.”

(<http://www.wallarah.com.au/>)

While Wyong Coal has made many, apparently, philanthropic gestures and promises to the Central Coast the focus has, of course, been mainly on the successful completion of the project. The largest piece of philanthropy was (as reported in the Express Advocate March 21, 2014 p.7) promising almost \$20million in public benefits, if the NSW Government approved Wallarah 2!

However, as has already been argued, the people of the Central Coast have already created a depth of social capital based mainly within the aesthetics provided by its rich and diverse heritage. And it is today this capital that stands in contrast to the rhetoric and promises being utilised by Wyong Coal and its proponents. What their rhetoric has consistently failed to address is that the burgeoning demand in the region for homes, land and infrastructure can only be sustained if it is accompanied by a symbiotic expansion of the Coast’s social capital, communal resilience and life style.

As the World Bank explains, “*Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together*”.

(<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/EXTSOCIALCAPITAL/0,,contentMDK:20185164~menuPK:418217~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:401015,00.html>)

On this note it can now be argued that the rhetoric utilised by Wyong Coal Pty Ltd when aligned with that of the mining, extraction and energy industries and combined with the inefficiencies of governance has been designed to create and then exploit a fatal weakening in social cohesion. This paper can charge therefore that such rhetoric has been designed to facilitate the unthinking acceptance of propaganda aimed at diminishing the communal strengths and ethics inherent within social justice.

If such a charge is sustained it clearly demonstrates how arrogance itself fosters a disdain for people’s wellbeing which opens the door to allow parasitical influences to take root.

The propaganda:

An Environmental Impact Statement conducted by Hansen Bailey Environmental Consultants in February 2013 concluded the following: “Environmental costs which have been identified are capable of being acceptably managed by operational controls, land acquisition and management plans. Ecological and long term costs have been minimised and will be offset by management strategies to maintain and improve vegetation and ecological values in the long term”.

(<http://www.wallarah.com.au/sustainability>)

As the history books proclaim, the mining, extraction and energy industries have notably failed to address their global record of corruption and deceit. We only have to look to ICAC hearings in NSW to see how the taint of corruption and power broking in these industries have destroyed public confidence and along with it the social cohesion that has already been noted as necessary for the raising of social capital.

Moreover, Wyong Coal Pty Ltd consistently ignored increasing demands for social justice and transparency as it continued with its policy of thinly veiled Realpolitik programs of division and social manipulation to cynically target social institutions and bureaucracy alike with money, promises and propaganda.

Putting aside any allegations of corrupt practices it should be noted that any vacillation on the part of Government can and is perceived as a serious breach of community consultation. As this paper has already explored, the need for social cohesion and its importance to the raising of social capital is of paramount importance to all communities. So what can draw here is a picture of how the propaganda being promoted by Wyong Coal Pty Ltd is aimed at removing the control of both environmental and ecological management of the Central Coast from the people by handing them to the political sphere a design which would be clearly prejudicial to the ability of the Central Coast to develop its *own social capital into the future*.

This observation when combined with the political manipulations of the NSW Government and its bureaucracies demonstrate how propaganda is designed to make communities who stand against the combined forces of government and corporate thinking into protestors rather than concerned citizens. And this thus brings into focus the legislation that exists to inhibit or curb protests and protesters because such legislation is also utilised to restrict public gatherings, open debate and communal action. There can be no doubt that propaganda when provided with legislative support is always unconscionable as it comes pervaded with the stench of Facism.

It can be charged therefore that there can be no excuse for governance to ever utilise propaganda designed to impair the people's ability to innovate or inspire social change or development in their own likeness.

The dialect:

“Small towns are reinventing their social and economic futures based largely on a combination of the skills of local residents and the assets represented by the land. Forests, farmland, and coastal areas are magnets for tourists, and when coupled with the craft producing residents ... can produce promising economic futures”. (Kretzmann, John P. from Reich, John, Zautra, Alex J., Jan 04, 2010, Handbook of Adult Resilience, Guilford Press, New York, ISBN: 9781606234907)

Because the Central Coast is such a beautiful place to live, its people have been granted a legacy that is second to none. Natural resources abound and as these were developed people learned, albeit slowly, how they had to look after them, heal nature's wounds while providing for their children's future. Unfortunately, government and corporate thinking needs constant reminding that people are their natural resource and therefore, there exists a *shared responsibility* to do whatever must be done to assist the people develop a future which they own.

While the mosaic that is the Central Coast appears to provide a life style that is strong in assets, social cohesion and aesthetics this is the **ambience** already talked about. It is therefore important to remember that while this is the 'glue' that holds the people of the Central Coast together its tensile strength must always be embryonic for this is what makes it an ongoing process. So, the imperative spoken of here is that the people of the Central Coast must be allowed to create their vision for the Central Coast in their own likeness.

It can now be argued that what the people of the Central Coast fear is if the likes of Wallarah 2 proceeds, the protests are silenced and public opinion ignored this will politically open the door to CSG extraction (fracking) in urban areas, oil drilling off the coast and energy costs forever tied to the global market place. All of these fears are the result of the lack of transparent governance and political procrastination that has been exasperated by the language of arrogance as portrayed above. Moreover this paper can argue that what people today actually face is that the rhetoric and propaganda of corporate thinking will without constant criticism cement itself as Australia's national dialect while democracy in Australia come under serious threat by arrogant governance.

Conclusion:

This paper demonstrates how the dialect being pushed by corporate thinking demands that communities place a value on the intangible only so that it might be sold. Unfortunately, if history tells us anything, it is that in Man, Pragmatism often rules the heart. So, for the people of the Central Coast to be freed from the insecurities and politics of 18th Century 'Wealth Creation' they must remain free to build upon the aesthetics of the Central Coast to be thus able to share equally the ambience that it creates.

This paper has argued that the rhetoric and propaganda perpetrated by the NSW Government and Wyong Coal Pty Ltd together have been an arrogant cacophony of cynical expositions designed to enable the continued subjugation of the Central Coast by the mining, extraction and energy industries.

Because this story has been a modern reading of an 18th Century ideology it is evident that far too many people in positions of power unthinkingly allow themselves to become complicit in an arrogant dialect of unconscionable conduct. As has been seen, such arrogance allows these people to argue away unconscionable conduct as a fact of business while ignoring that morally such conduct will always represent a crime against humanity whether one remains ignorant of it or not.

So, fair minded people can allow no deviation from the commitment by politicians, authorities or bureaucracy to the continuing expansion of a community's social capital simply because social capital will always be a critical feature of communal ambience and the life styles it supports. Democratic governance therefore must be careful to always hold itself accountable to the people rather than to the corporate or market influences that claim to represent the people's needs. Because to do other has been shown to be an arrogance that always leads governance to act unconscionably.

END

References:

1. Express Advocate, Wednesday March 12, 2014 (p.2)
2. http://www.discovernewswaustralia.com/destination_central_coast.asp
3. Article from "*Development and underdevelopment: the political economy of global inequality*/ Mitchell A. Seligson, John T. Passe-Smith, chapter 2, 1998.
4. <http://www.wallarah.com.au/>
Rostow W.W. (1990) *The Stages of Economic Growth*, New York, Cambridge University Press.