

Project SafeCom News and Updates

Sunday, 6 December 2015

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1. Paris UN Climate Conference 2015: Australia rejects fossil fuel pledge

Sydney Morning Herald
December 1, 2015 - 9:49AM
Tom Arup

Australia has rejected a statement of support for reform of fossil fuel subsidies after Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull made a last-minute call to break the news to New Zealand counterparts on Sunday night in Paris.

The statement, which was launched at the first full day of the Paris climate summit, will see almost 40 countries sign a communique committing to promote the phase out of inefficient government subsidies for the use of coal, gas and oil.

Organisers had hoped Australia would also get on board. But with rural and conservative MPs in the Coalition revolting back home in Canberra, Australia has decided not to put its name to the statement.

In the discussions over the statement Australia had expressed some concern about the use of an International Monetary Fund definition of subsidy, which the French had wanted included.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull later said the document contained a "rather gratuitous reference to an IMF report which goes much much further than inefficient fuel subsidies".

Mr Turnbull said the IMF report effectively argued that not having a carbon tax in place was a fossil fuel subsidy. The IMF argues that if the full economic costs that burning fossil fuels causes is not factored in the use of coal, oil and gas is effectively subsidised.

Australia has already signed up to what some might consider tougher language on fossil fuel subsidies - which are effectively government incentives making it cheaper to use, coal, gas or oil - through the G20, which in 2009 committed to phasing out inefficient subsidies.

New Zealand Prime Minister John Key joined the UN climate change head Christiana Figueres, Chile President Michelle Bachelet, Prime Minister of Sweden Stefan Lofven and Danish Prime Minister Lar Lokke Rasmussen in launching the fossil fuel subsidy reform statement.

Back home in Australia fossil fuel subsidies has been a tricky issue with a major between dispute between environmentalists and industry over whether a diesel rebate for farm and mine trucks should be considered.

The Australian Conservation Foundation has said the diesel rebate would cost Australians \$26 billion over the next four years. But mining and farm groups say the rebate compensates them for tax paid on fuel used in off-road vehicles that is being collected for road maintenance.

It is unclear that signing up to the fossil fuel subsidy statement would have actually required Australia to make any changes to the fuel tax credit for miners and farmers.

Mr Turnbull declared that the diesel fuel rebate was not a subsidy. And he said Australia did not have any inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.

When the prospect of Australia signing up to the statement emerged over the weekend it sparked anger among some Coalition MPs, who voiced vocal opposition to the idea. Queensland Nationals MP George Christensen on twitter said "this communique, if signed, will cost coal mining jobs. For sake of NQ jobs, I oppose this."

Asked about the debate, opposition leader Bill Shorten told reporters in Paris: "Labor doesn't have a policy to scrap the diesel fuel rebate at all."

The International Energy Agency this month noted that fossil fuel subsidies continue to outpace those for renewable energy by a factor of more than four-to-one. In 2014, those subsidies totalled \$US490 billion (\$695 billion) compared with \$US112 billion for clean energy sources in the power sector.

<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/un-climate-conference/paris-un-climate-conference-2015-australia-rejects-fossil-fuel-pledge-20151130-glbw4s.html>

2. Paris UN Climate Conference 2015: Turnbull's Kyoto pledge generates angst

Sydney Morning Herald
December 3, 2015 - 8:51AM
Peter Hannam and Tom Arup, Paris

Australia is under fire at the Paris climate talks amid concern it is taking advantage of overly flexible rules to claim greenhouse gas emissions are falling when they are actually on the increase.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull drew applause from fellow leaders at Monday's summit opening when he declared that Australia would ratify the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol - the existing climate treaty that applies to some industrialised countries only.

Australia is relying on its negotiating teams securing a definition of emissions that allows the country to count a reduction in deforestation towards its target.

However, delegates from a grouping called the Association of Small Island States expressed concern that the definition would in reality allow Australia to increase its industrial emissions by 2020 to about 11 per cent above 2000 levels while still being able to claim it is meeting its target of a 5 per cent cut in that period.

A senior South African delegate said Australia was playing within the rules as laid out. Such rules may be tightened during the Paris talks - but only for post-2020 emissions.

A member of a major country negotiating team told Fairfax Media that observers who did not think there was a problem were either unaware of the technical issues involved or making a "strategic assessment that it is not worth making a fuss over".

That is because dispute over the Kyoto Protocol only relates to emissions up to 2020, and the main game at the Paris summit is winning support for a long-term future where the world's nations will become net-zero emitters.

'Clear commitment'

Environment Minister Greg Hunt said Australia would ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

"The Prime Minister made a clear commitment this week to ratification," Mr Hunt said. "We're fully confident that the rules will remain as they are and accommodate all of our objectives."

Former Greens leader Christine Milne, in Paris as a global Greens ambassador, said work by the University of Melbourne had detailed accounting issues that allowed Australia's emissions to rise even as the country met formal commitments to cut them.

Australia has only to reduce emissions by 0.5 per cent each year between 2013 and 2020 to meet its second stage Kyoto commitments.

Estimates suggest that the favourable ruling allowing reduced deforestation to be counted against industrial and other greenhouse gas emissions would amount to between 60 and 120 million tonnes of carbon dioxide.

It is roughly equivalent to the amount that the government has signed contracts to pay for through its Direct Action emissions reduction fund - 92 million tonnes, at a cost of about \$1.22 billion.

Australia also went into the second period of the Kyoto Protocol with a large batch of "surplus" emissions credits, gained when they beat their target for the first period. That target actually allowed Australia to increase emissions by 8 per cent between 1990 and 2012.

The surplus credits are now used to offset any rise in emissions between 2013 and 2020.

"Once again, Australia's relying on dodgy accounting rules to include land use...in order to massage the figures and do nothing," Ms Milne said.

"Mr Turnbull's taken the gamble that they are going to be able to beat the world into submission."

Emissions rise

New figures show that emissions from Australia's energy sector continue to increase.

They have risen 3.5 per cent in the 15 months since the Abbott government scrapped the carbon price, according to consultants Pitt & Sherry.

Australia's total emissions have risen about 2 per cent since the end of June 2014, the energy consultancy found in a joint study with The Australia Institute.

Slow progress in Paris

Meanwhile, the Paris negotiations made uneven progress on as work continued on a global agreement to tackle climate change.

Developing countries were taking a hard line on ensuring that their different economic circumstances to wealthy nations were taken into account.

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius told negotiators to pick up the pace, warning: "Options for compromise need to be found as quickly as possible".

Indian negotiator Ajay Mathur focused his comments on the need to help developing countries with technology development.

He said that rich nations wanting India to use less coal had to help make clean energy cheaper.

"If you want Indians to pay for renewables then somehow the costs will have to come down," he said.

It is understood that India is pushing for loan guarantees that would deliver capital for renewable energy at a lower interest rate than on the market.

Speaking for the first time at the Paris talks, US chief the United States top negotiator Todd Stern said his country favoured India being given aid to help it build up renewable energy at the expense of coal.

"We certainly want to work with our Indian partners to encourage what they want to do," Mr Stern said.

Mr Stern said other countries should worry about US Republican's efforts to scrap regulations introduced by Barack Obama to cut emissions from coal power because the President would not sign a bill that aimed to unwind it.

<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/un-climate-conference/paris-un-climate-conference-2015-turnbulls-kyoto-pledge-generates-angst-20151202-gldzme.html>

3. Sweden seeks emergency power to halt Danish bridge traffic

Minister says Öresund road bridge between Copenhagen and Malmö may be shut in emergencies under proposed security legislation

The Guardian
Reuters in Stockholm
Friday 4 December 2015 03.43 AEDT

The Swedish government is preparing a proposal that would make it possible on security grounds to halt road traffic across the Öresund bridge to Denmark, as the country struggles to come to grips with record arrivals of refugees.

The proposal, not yet finalised, would be part of legislation requiring identity checks on all public transportation to Sweden in an effort to reduce the number of asylum seekers, a spokeswoman for the infrastructure minister said.

The plan would include giving the government the option of temporarily closing road traffic over the bridge (although still allowing trains) and on other roads into Sweden, said the spokeswoman.

The Öresund bridge, linking Denmark's capital, Copenhagen, with Sweden's third largest city, Malmö, is extensively used by commuters as well as by freight traffic. About 20,000 motor vehicles cross it daily.

The infrastructure minister, Anna Johansson, told the local news agency TT that closing the bridge would be a very dramatic measure and it would only happen in an emergency. "Our intent and our hope is that we will not have to use this legal possibility," Johansson was quoted as saying.

Sweden, with a population of about 9.6 million people, has proposed a number of changes to tighten asylum rules after the Swedish migration agency, Migrationsverket, said it expected arrivals of asylum seekers in the country to reach 190,000 during 2015.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/03/swedish-government-proposes-bridge-closure-as-refugee-numbers-rise>

4. Peter Dutton supersedes Scott Morrison as Liberal Party's conservative champion

Sydney Morning Herald
November 30, 2015 - 6:07PM
James Massola

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has emerged as a new champion of the Liberal Party's conservative wing following Scott Morrison's elevation to the position of Treasurer.

Mr Morrison had been seen, until the September leadership spill that saw Malcolm Turnbull replace Tony Abbott, as politically close to the former prime minister and the leading light in senior conservative ranks.

But almost immediately since the change of leadership and his elevation to Treasurer, the hard right of the party have been questioning Mr Morrison's loyalty to the conservative cause.

Revelations in Fairfax Media on Monday that Mr Turnbull offered Mr Morrison the position of treasurer in a Turnbull government in February, seven months before Mr Abbott was dumped, have further damaged his cause.

The Treasurer downplayed that report on Monday, describing it as "old news" and a "tin foil hat conspiracy".

"It is old news...I mean, anyway, it is coming up to Christmas, people are trying to get people to buy newspapers and that is what happens," Mr Morrison said on Monday.

On Sunday night, Mr Morrison had suggested the story was designed to sell a new book by Hartcher. There is no such book.

But Mr Dutton is now being discussed as a possible future deputy leader by conservatives who are angry with Mr Morrison as well as deputy leader Julie Bishop, over the events of September.

The Immigration Minister's loyalty to Mr Abbott until the bitter end has also been noted, as has the fact that Mr Abbott now attends a regular lunch Mr Dutton hosts - the lunch is scheduled to be held again on Tuesday - of conservative MPs in Parliament House's so-called "Monkey Pod" meeting room.

Along with Finance Minister Mathias Cormann, Mr Dutton – who has maintained a hardline approach to border protection – is now seen as the most senior conservative in the cabinet following the axing of former ministers Kevin Andrews and Eric Abetz.

Fairfax Media spoke to half a dozen conservatives who said that Mr Morrison's standing with the party's right had been damaged by his handling of the switch from Mr Abbott to Mr Turnbull.

One said that "neither side now trusts Morrison; he has identified himself as being for sale" while Ms Bishop had also been "irrevocably damaged" by her involvement in the spill.

Another said that " Scott was the great white hope. Everyone thought he was the person Abbott would hand over to but not now. Dutton is now the most senior conservative ... if you want to raise an issue, you go to Dutton not Morrison."

And a third MP said that Mr Morrison had been repeatedly promoted by Mr Abbott and that, following his switch to Mr Turnbull, "he has a long way to come back" and the so-called "Monkey Pod" lunches – which have been running for years – were nothing sinister.

"Believe me, we aren't agitating against Turnbull. Right now conservatives are saying no one will touch Turnbull, the only beneficiary would be Morrison or Bishop and they are persona non grata."

Fairfax Media revealed last week that moderate Liberal MPs had suspicions a "resistance movement" had sprung up around Mr Abbott, and was backed by fellow travellers including Kevin Andrews, Andrew Nikolic and at least some attendees of the "Monkey Pod" lunches – including Angus Taylor, Michael Sukkar, Zed Seselja, Natasha Griggs, Craig Kelly and Ian Goodenough.

Mr Dutton said the lunch was simply "a gathering of like-minded people talking about important issues".

Another MP mentioned as a possible future leaders of the party's conservative wing is new cabinet minister Josh Frydenberg, who has launched a strong defence of coal exports since becoming Resources Minister and who on Sunday accused the Grand Mufti of Australia, Dr Ibrahim Abu Mohammed, of a failure of leadership in recent comments about the Paris terrorist attacks.

Mr Frydenberg also supported Mr Abbott until the end but is, however, a strong supporter of same-sex marriage, which sets him apart from conservative colleagues.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/peter-dutton-supersedes-scott-morrison-as-liberal-partys-conservative-champion-20151130-qlbdkb.html>

4. Bernard Keane: The strange case of Julian Assange

Monday November 30, 2015

Bernard Keane

Crikey politics editor

Julian Assange faces very serious allegations, politicians like to say. That was the description from UK Prime Minister David Cameron's office three years ago, defending the UK's determination to extradite him to Sweden. And that was the description early this year from then-UK deputy PM Nick Clegg, too -- "he should go to Sweden to face very serious allegations and charges of rape," said Clegg, not long before leading his party to annihilation in this year's general election. Clegg, of course, was peddling the oft-repeated lie that there are charges against Assange.

But for very serious allegations -- sexual molestation, unlawful coercion, sexual assault -- the UK and Swedish governments have displayed zero interest in investigating them. In fact, the history of the case against Assange is a history of increasingly bizarre efforts by authorities to avoid questioning him.

When Swedish prosecutors first examined complaints about Assange by two women in 2010, the Chief Prosecutor of Stockholm dismissed all but one of the allegations, including the accusation of sexual assault, saying "there is no suspicion of any crime whatsoever". After speaking to prosecutors, Assange remained in Sweden for another week to be interviewed about the one remaining allegation (of molestation). However, after an appeal by former Swedish politician Claes Borgstrom, another prosecutor, Marianne Ny, reopened the whole case. Assange remained in Sweden and offered to be interviewed again, but, in the first of what would turn out to be a long litany of excuses, was told Ny was ill and unable to speak to him. Ny's office then told Assange's lawyer he was free to leave Sweden, but once Assange did so, an arrest warrant was issued for him. Assange then offered to return to Sweden to speak to Ny and gave her a full week of dates in which he would do so. These were all rejected.

This was all despite Swedish police having access to the texts of one of the alleged victims of Assange saying she "did not want to put any charges on JA but that the police were keen on getting a grip on him", that she was shocked when he was arrested given she only wanted him to take an STD test, and that "it was the police who made up the charges".

Ny's unwillingness to interview Assange would become the pattern for the next five years: Assange repeatedly offered to speak to Swedish authorities by phone, by video link, or in person at the Australian embassy. The Swedes refused all opportunities to do so and demanded Assange return to Sweden, issuing a European arrest warrant for him. Eventually the EAW would be upheld by British courts under UK laws, which since then have been amended. Under current British law, a similar case to Assange's would now be successfully appealed and the EAW rejected.

Once he had sought refuge in the Ecuadorean embassy in 2012, Assange continued to offer Swedish authorities the opportunity to speak with him, and they continued to reject them. But while they regularly rejected Assange's offer to be interviewed, other suspects were treated very differently: during the last five years, the Swedes have on 44 occasions asked to travel to the UK to interview, or asked British police to interview, other people in Britain in relation to allegations including violent crime, fraud and even murder. Assange, however, couldn't be treated the same way -- he had to go to Sweden.

In fact, so absurd was Ny's refusal to question Assange that in November last year, a Swedish court found she had breached her duty in failing to progress the case. With Assange's Swedish arrest warrant in danger of being quashed due to her inaction and the expiry of three elements of the investigation looming due to Sweden's statute of limitations, Ny then performed a sudden about-face -- she said she would question Assange in the Ecuadorean embassy, as requested by Assange and Ecuador for years, and contacted UK authorities about the process for doing so.

But Ny still had a card left to play: despite her saying in March that she would do so, she never contacted the Ecuadoreans about the interview -- in fact, eventually she admitted that she hadn't bothered contacting the Ecuadorean Foreign Ministry in Quito until "a late stage" -- just five days before a scheduled interview with Assange in June. When the Ecuadoreans said they wanted diplomatic staff present during the interview given the country had given him refuge, the Swedes called the interview off and blamed the Ecuadoreans for failing to co-operate. Ny had managed to avoid yet another interview opportunity.

The refusal of the Swedes to interview Assange seems to give credence to Assange's fears the Swedes' priority is to get him in custody not so the now one remaining allegation of sexual assault can be progressed, but so he can be extradited to the United States under the investigation into WikiLeaks' role in the release of Chelsea Manning cables. We learnt in March that this US investigation is still on foot, despite Manning now being in the third year of her sentence.

But if that seems like a conspiracy theory, it gets better: in October, it was revealed via freedom of information laws that UK prosecutors had urged Ny not to interview Assange in the UK, even before he sought refuge with the Ecuadoreans. "I suggest you interview him only on surrender to Sweden," prosecutor Paul Close told Ny in 2011. He was concerned that the interview might suggest Assange was innocent.

So despite the serious allegations the UK government said Assange faced, its prosecutors didn't want him interviewed by the Swedes about them.

Meantime, the Australian government had said nothing. Julie Bishop was happy to use Assange to criticise the Gillard government but since becoming Foreign Minister has barely mentioned him.

If the plan was to use a sexual assault allegation -- one prosecutors refused to investigate, one described by one of alleged victims as invented by police -- to nullify WikiLeaks even if Assange avoided being extradited to the United States, it's only partly worked. This year WikiLeaks has had its best year since 2010, releasing, inter alia, repeated iterations of chapters from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a vast accumulation of diplomatic cables from the monstrous Saudi Arabian regime, emails from CIA director John Brennan's unauthorised personal email account, more revelations about National Security Agency surveillance targets, the text of the secret Trade In Services Agreement draft and details of the NSA's massive spying on French presidents, which infuriated the government of Francois Hollande.

Even so, Assange remains confined on the basis of very serious allegations, with the Swedish and UK governments apparently keen to ensure they are never properly investigated, while his own government would prefer that Australians forget about him entirely.

<http://www.crikey.com.au/2015/11/30/the-strange-case-of-julian-assange/>

5. Al Jazeera: A glimpse of Australia's Manus Island refugee prison

Nearly 1,000 men have been locked up in detention camp in Papua New Guinea since they tried to reach Australia by boat.

Al Jazeera
Andrew Thomas
01 Dec 2015 12:30 GMT

"We have lost hope," said Aziz.

"It is like hell," Behrouz Boochani told me.

"We are human," implored Behnam Satah. "We're not animals."

These words were told to me by refugees in phone conversations I could have had from anywhere.

But somehow being on Manus Island - physically close to those I was talking with - made their words resonate far more.

I could understand better the physical conditions of their imprisonment: the heat, the humidity and the mosquitoes.

The mental anguish, of course, I could still only imagine. I was only on Manus Island for three days.

They have been there - locked up - for more than two years.

In July 2013, the Australian government decided that asylum seekers who tried to come to Australia by boat should instead be deported to Papua New Guinea or Nauru.

There was the humanitarian argument: deterring people from getting on boats to Australia would mean fewer drowning.

And there was, more importantly, the politics.

I reported from enough western Sydney swing seats in the run-up to the 2013 election to know how irritating critical voters found "queue-jumping refugees".

But even if those arguments have merit - and some in Europe now think they do - it is impossible not to sympathise with those who have become the policy's human legacy.

That's what I wanted my report from Manus Island to be about: the people whose distress is integral to the Australian policy's "success".

<http://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/asia/2015/12/australia-manus-island-refugees-151201080133207.html>

6. Poster Crowdfunding Campaign: "I Am A Boat Person"

Support our poster campaign to celebrate asylum seekers and their amazing contributions to Australia and give them a voice that allows them to tell their story.

See and donate at <https://chuffed.org/project/i-came-by-boat>

By I Am A Boat Person Inc

At Chuffed.org
Melbourne, Vic

We need your help to buy advertising space for our campaign so the posters can be placed in bus shelters and train stations all over the country.

Help us to get these posters seen by as many people as possible!

What are we doing?

The poster campaign is a powerful way of showing that asylum seekers are people with courage and humanity, and that they can contribute greatly to Australian society.

We are trying to raise enough money for the posters to be rolled out nationally through bus, tram and train stations and displayed for two/three weeks, at up to 400 locations nationwide.

We will also launch them through social media and an interactive website, with the ability for people to send in their own photos and videos and tell their own stories.

We are planning an exhibition too!

Why are we doing it?

We feel there is a need in Australia to shed some positive light on asylum seekers who come by boat and to highlight the social, economic and cultural diversity they bring to the country.

Through the poster campaign, we will hope to emphasize the importance of accepting them and welcoming them into the Australian community.

How are we doing it?

We got together an amazing crew who are donating their time to create the posters.

We already photographed a few extraordinary people from different occupations and backgrounds, and we recorded their remarkable stories. You can see some of the images [here](#). We will shoot more of these portraits and videos before the campaign is ready to launch.

Then we partnered with I Am a Boat Person, a charity committed to raising awareness of and solidarity with asylum seekers and their communities. They have been a great support with the administrative side of things, and they also are the reason why your contributions are tax deductible!

Who are we?

We are a bunch of creatives from the advertising industry who wanted to try to help asylum seekers using our unique skills and connections.

Our coordinator who initiated the campaign is a successful international makeup artist who was a refugee herself - from former Yugoslavia.

'I know what it's like to run for your life with nothing but the clothes you are wearing, and to have to start again. I am grateful for the treatment I received; it was immensely helpful in rebuilding my life. I was able to create a successful career as a makeup artist, in Australia and overseas. I would like to see that sort of opportunity given to all asylum seekers, no matter how they get here.'

Campaign Coordinator: Blanka Dudas

Photographer: Lucas Allen

Producer: Alexandra Allen

Art Director: Simone Elder

Studio and equipment by Doug MacGregor at Daylight Studios.

What do we want from you?

Two things:

1. Advertising isn't cheap. The more money we can raise, the more impact we can have. Everything we raise will go towards buying advertising space so the posters can be put up all over the country. We will need more than \$150 000; we are hoping to raise a part of it via crowd funding and are applying for grants and some corporate funding also. As we are working as a part of a charity, donations are tax-deductible.

2. Did you come to Australia by boat? Would you like to be a part of our campaign? We'd love to hear from you! We'd love to share your story, in posters and/or on the web. Please contact us if you would like to participate.

We are planning to launch the posters in March 2016.

You can follow our progress on

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/icamebyboat/>
Twitter @icamebyboataus

Instagram @icamebyboat

Please support our project; and if you are unable to contribute financially, please help by sharing this link on social media.

Thank you

See and donate at <https://chuffed.org/project/i-came-by-boat>

7. Child Immigration Detainees Lose Chance For Summer Freedom

Huffington Post

Karen Barlow

Posted: 04/12/2015 17:11 AEST

Updated: 04/12/2015 17:11 AEST

CANBERRA -- With the end of the parliamentary sitting year, all remaining children in onshore Australian immigration detention have lost their chance to be freed by Christmas.

The Senate voted more than a week ago to support Greens amendments to the Migration and Maritime Powers Amendment Bill which would have led to the release of the last 112 child detainees who have parents or guardians with adverse security assessments from ASIO.

The amended legislation, with other amendments to allow journalists inside detention centres and make the reporting of abuse in centres mandatory, had to pass the Government-controlled House of Representatives.

Despite lower house approval being unlikely, the legislation was not dealt with before parliament rose for 2015.

"It is a real disappointment that Malcolm Turnbull has made a decision to keep these children locked up over Christmas," Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young told the Huffington Post Australia.

"It would have been one simple vote to accept the Senate's amendments.

"More than 100 children here in Australia will remain over the summer locked up."

The amended legislation, supported by Labor and most of the crossbenchers, would remove the Immigration Minister's requirement to make a determination in such cases involving children in onshore detention and allow the minor to make the choice whether to stay or go.

It would apply to children in families transferred from Nauru, but not to children currently detained on the Pacific island nation.

The office of Immigration Minister Peter Dutton told HuffPost Australia that no decision has been made on the legislation.

In a statement, the Immigration Department said child detainees do have outside access, although one excursion program in Melbourne had been recently discontinued.

"All children in immigration detention facilities continue to have access to external activities, excursions and education," it said.

"The Department is committed to a compassionate approach to the care of those in detention. Where children are concerned this includes providing opportunities for social development and community engagement."

The Greens Friday are launching its annual toy drive for detained children.

Senator Hanson-Young told HuffPost Australia that the children must not be forgotten.

"They have every right to be able to have their freedom realised, to be able to be kids. Live safely in the community," she said.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2015/12/03/greens-children-immigration-detention_n_8715062.html

8. Christmas Island detention centre preparing housing ahead of High Court offshore decision

ABC News Online

By political reporter Stephanie Anderson

First posted Sun 6 Dec 2015, 8:49am

Updated Sun 6 Dec 2015, 1:57pm

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton says preparations are underway to accommodate more asylum seekers at Christmas Island in case the Government loses a High Court case against offshore detention.

Lawyers have argued detaining asylum seekers on Nauru is in breach of Australian laws.

They have told the High Court that the Federal Government is in control of the centre, despite its operating under Nauruan law.

Mr Dutton said he was confident that the Federal Government was in a strong legal position.

He told Sky News that the High Court was expected to deliver its finding next year, but the Department of Immigration and Border Protection had already started planning in case of a loss.

"It's prudent for my department ... to put in place contingency arrangements," he said.

"If we needed to accommodate more people on Christmas Island, there is some prep work that is taking place there now."

Human Rights Law Centre legal advocacy director and one of the lawyers involved in the case, Daniel Webb, said a win for their client could have significant implications for the Federal Government.

But Mr Webb told the ABC he did not know whether a win would result in an end to offshore detention.

"The questions involved in this case, about the lawfulness of our government's role in detaining people in other countries, they really strike at the core of the current offshore arrangements," he said.

"The answers to those questions, it is fair to say, will have significant implications going forward."

Mr Webb said he was not surprised by the Government's actions on Christmas Island, citing previous measures such as the transition to an open centre on Nauru on the eve of the court hearing.

While the High Court finishes sitting this week, and will not return until February, Mr Webb said a finding could be delivered at any time.

Further detail has been sought from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-06/christmas-island-preparing-to-house-more-asylum-seekers/7005240>

9. Christmas Island gears for asylum rush

The Australian

December 5, 2015 12:00AM

Paige Taylor & Jared Owens

Planning is under way for the possible transfer of hundreds of asylum-seekers from overseas detention back to the Australian territory of Christmas Island, ahead of a High Court ruling that could critically undermine offshore processing.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection has commissioned repairs and upgrades, including 25 new airconditioners, at a vacant Howard-era detention camp on Christmas Island known to locals as Phosphate Hill. It was most recently used to accommodate asylum-seeker families with children but has been vacant for a year.

It is believed the camp has fallen into disrepair in the heat and humidity of the tropical island, where monsoonal rainforest can quickly overtake fences and even buildings.

The Weekend Australian has been told the department's contingency planning includes trying to find tradespeople to fix roofing and other amenities at the Phosphate Hill camp, next to the island's recreation centre and swimming pool. Separate work has been commissioned at the main detention centre on the other side of the island, called North West Point, following rioting by detainees last month.

The violence at the main detention centre — used only for adult males — occurred after the escape and death of asylum-seeker Fazel Chegeni. In the wake of extensive damage and fires, the government flew 20 detainees to Casuarina prison in Perth. None was an asylum-seeker.

Christmas Island Shire President Gordon Thomson said he believed the contingencies were related to the looming High Court decision on offshore processing policy.

Island administrator Barry Haase has said he would like the camp to be used as tourist accommodation but it remains under the department's control.

Mr Thomson said Immigration Minister Peter Dutton told him during a recent visit to the island — that the department had maintained ownership of the Phosphate Hill camp after asylum-seeker families left last December — rather than handing it over to the Department of Infrastructure, which is responsible for Christmas Island — in case the High Court ruled against offshore processing.

“Mr Dutton told me ... if the High Court case went against the government, they would need it to bring people back from offshore centres,” he said.

“Everyone on the island knows about this flurry of activity and it is in my view obviously a contingency.”

A spokeswoman for Mr Dutton said it was unlikely he or the department would be able to respond to a query about the upgrades and repairs last night.

The High Court case centres on a Bangladeshi woman who, despite being verified as a refugee by the Nauruan government, has been granted a visa that would confine her to the island's immigration detention centre.

Refugee lawyers argue that the woman deserves the protection of the Constitution and cannot lose those protections by being detained at the behest of the government in a foreign country beyond the reach of Australian courts.

The High Court reserved its judgment in October, and indicated yesterday that it did not expect to deliver a ruling in the case before February.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/immigration/christmas-island-gears-for-asylum-rush/story-fn9hm1gu-1227634633823>

10. Hamid Khazaei 'genetically susceptible' to infection that killed him, inquest hears

ABC News Online

By Dea Clarke

First posted Fri 4 Dec 2015, 10:07am

Updated Fri 4 Dec 2015, 10:29am

An inquest into the death of an Iranian asylum seeker has heard he was genetically susceptible to the infection that killed him.

Hamid Khazaei, 24, died in a Brisbane hospital last year after his leg became infected on Manus Island.

His death raised questions about conditions and the availability of doctors and medical treatment at the Manus Island detention centre.

An autopsy report submitted to coroner Terry Ryan at a pre-inquest conference in Brisbane today said the infection was caused by a rare bacteria, which caused septicaemia.

The autopsy found Mr Khazaei suffered from chronic granulomatous, an inherited immune disease which made him susceptible to infection.

A bacteria called chromobacterium violaceum, found in soil and stagnant water, causes the infection.

It can aggressively attack internal organs after entering the bloodstream.

The infection is rare, with only about 200 reported cases in the world since the 1920s.

The hearing was told medical facilities on the island were not sufficient to treat Mr Khazaei, as there was a limited supply of antibiotics, no X-ray machine and no laboratory.

The medical facility was housed in shipping containers, where conditions were hot.

It is believed Mr Khazaei had applied a bandage to a wound on his leg a month before he died.

As Mr Khazaei's condition worsened he was placed in medical isolation, but it took three days before he was flown to hospital in Port Moresby before being transported to Brisbane, where he died.

He was buried last year in Iran's capital Tehran.

The matter will return to court in March next year.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-04/hamid-khazaei-asylum-seeker-who-died-manus-island-susceptible/7001720>

11. Safety concerns for refugees and workers as Nauru asbestos removal program kicks off

ABC Pacific Beat

By Michael Walsh

First posted Mon 30 Nov 2015, 7:03am

Updated Mon 30 Nov 2015, 11:41am

Refugees and local workers on Nauru are being hired to remove asbestos from houses on the island without proper protection from the hazardous material.

The ABC has also learned the material is not being disposed of safely and could pose a future health threat.

The work is linked to a \$5.5 million housing renovation scheme announced in September by the government of Nauru, which hopes to deal with the roofing and cladding of up to 41 per cent of the island's residences, plus key facilities, that contain the deadly material.

"This program is safe and greatly beneficial to the people of Nauru," the government said in a statement, adding: "No refugees are involved in this project."

But a Rohingya refugee who asked to remain anonymous because of concerns he could get into trouble for speaking to foreign media said he was hired to do construction work as part of the scheme.

The refugee said his employer did not tell him he would be tasked with removing asbestos materials.

"He didn't say anything, he told me the morning I got there 'Hey, you take up the roofing, get on', just like that, didn't tell me about danger or anything," he said.

"One month I worked there. A lot of people looked at me and said 'Hey, you don't do it like that because you're not using tools, not using the gloves, not using the masks. It's a very big problem for you and your body'."

While the government of Nauru said the renovation program was safe, the refugee said workers were not given the appropriate safety gear and sometimes went without any protection at all.

"Sometimes they give me masks and they give me one glove. After maybe two days, three days, another one. After three days they didn't give me anything, no gloves, no mask," he said.

Opposition MP and former president Sprent Dabwido has seen some of the renovation work himself and said he was concerned about safety on the sites.

"Those refugees are willing to do the hard work but I don't think they know the safety risk they're taking by doing this job," he said.

"They climb onto the house, they remove the asbestos with no safety equipment."

The ABC has received photographs of a group of Nauruans and refugees attaching a new roof to a house, removing the existing deteriorated asbestos roofing.

The photographs show workers wearing their own clothes, instead of coveralls, with only hats and pieces of cloth as head protection.

Asbestos review cites existing contamination

A report from June 2015, funded by the European Union and implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP), found that 212,000 square metres of asbestos-laden material is on buildings on Nauru.

It found that "asbestos roofing and cladding on residential dwellings is often 60-70 years old and in bad condition".

A risk assessment and baseline work discovered that "all asbestos is old and in various stages of deterioration". It added that "in many cases it is in an advanced stage of deterioration" which were in danger of releasing asbestos fibres.

"Asbestos fibres in areas where people are able to breathe them in pose an ongoing and real health risk of asbestos-related diseases including debilitating conditions such as asbestosis and ... mesothelioma," it added.

While the building material tends to be relatively safe if kept in good condition, decades of poor maintenance in a tropical environment have left most roofs in poor shape.

Swab tests by EMS Laboratories of California found "significantly high" results of asbestos fibres in four locations including the maternity unit at Republic of Nauru Hospital, the port, the power plant, at two locations in the prison and in a government building.

Mr Dabwido believes little direction had been given to workers removing the asbestos.

"Even the hammering, I don't think there's any training because they throw the roofing off the top of the house and once it hits the ground it breaks and there's dust everywhere," he said.

Stewart Williams from SPREP, the organisation that recently completed the report on the asbestos hazards, said renovation work involving the removal of asbestos could be risky.

"Asbestos roofing, asbestos cladding, it's either nailed or screwed or otherwise attached to the rafters or framework. When that's removed it can break and fibres can be released," he said.

"Best practice, which is endorsed at the international level, is that when workers are working on asbestos cement sheeting they have to have the appropriate personal protective equipment to stop them taking asbestos dust off the site, to stop them inhaling the asbestos dust, or even creating asbestos dust.

"They have to have coveralls, they have to have respirators, they have to have gloves. They have to have them on prior to going on-site, and they have to take them off before they leave the site."

Hazardous material ends up exposed at local tip

The photographs obtained by the ABC also show pieces of removed asbestos next to the house and directly behind workers which should be placed in sealed bags. Other photos show broken roof sheets sitting uncovered in a local tip site.

Mr Williams said there were prescribed ways of handling asbestos, with specific options for Nauru detailed in the 2015 report.

"When they are removing the material itself it must be wetted down, usually with a soapy water mix. That material should be carefully removed to try not to break it, and that should be placed in plastic or 'haz-bags' and secured, wrapped up, so that it can't release asbestos fibres," he said.

"It's contrary to best practice if people are doing any removal activities, transport activities or disposal not following those requirements."

The June 2015 report also found that asbestos was currently dumped at the local tip, along with all other refuse.

"Scavenging of all refuse is common, including asbestos," it said.

There is little epidemiological evidence to indicate that asbestosis and mesothelioma have developed in Nauru's population after living in close proximity with the material for decades as "health records are not detailed and were partly lost in the 2013 fire at the hospital".

In its statement to the ABC, the Nauru government did not give specific details about safety precautions on the worksites, nor how the removed asbestos was being disposed of. "We'd suggest you don't rely in social media for your facts," it said, adding: "Any claims that this program is unsafe are false and more typical nonsense from the ABC."

The report estimates that it will cost about \$24 million to remove asbestos from Nauru, a cost which does not include cleaning-up its contaminated sites.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-30/refugees-removing-nauru-asbestos-without-proper-protection/6985292>

12. Department of Immigration ends 'inappropriate' outings for children in detention run by nuns

ABC News Online

774 ABC Melbourne

First posted Wed 2 Dec 2015, 10:34am

Updated Wed 2 Dec 2015, 3:19pm

A program run by a group of Catholic nuns that took children in immigration detention on outings has been deemed "not appropriate" by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

The Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP), run by the Brigidine Sisters, took groups of children from the Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation (MITA) in Broadmeadows out into the community for supervised day trips.

Sister Brigid Arthur said the program had run for four years until it was stopped by Australian Border Force (ABF) "about six months ago".

"[We'd] go to the Collingwood Children's Farm, go to the zoo occasionally, out to adventure playgrounds," Sister Brigid told 774 ABC Melbourne's Jon Faine.

"Anything that actually can entertain the kids and give them some stimulation."

The program also included occasional day trips for adults in immigration detention.

Sister Brigid said the program had been suspended by the ABF, which said it was "under review".

"We haven't actually been able to resume it, so presumably the review has ... had a negative outcome," Sister Brigid said.

ABF Regional Commander Don Smith told 774 ABC Melbourne's Rafael Epstein that he stopped the program because he was not comfortable with supervision levels.

"There were reports about some activities that were being undertaken by the nuns and the other members of the program where the levels of supervision for those activities weren't to the standard that I was comfortable with," he said.

He said the nuns would be welcome to join Serco officers on existing excursions organised for detainees.

"We welcome the nuns to participate in the excursions that we already have, we see that there is a degree of duplication in the activities, there was also a concern that we had insufficient oversight of what the activities that were being planned," he said.

"It's not the nuns ... the nuns were part of a program called the Designated Persons Program, so it wasn't just those nuns there were other members of the community who were interested in the welfare of people at the MITA, which of course I welcome.

"But the types of activities and the places they were taking them to, we had no visibility of and no control over."

In a statement, a spokesperson for the Immigration Department confirmed the program had been reviewed and, on a number of occasions, the outings were "not deemed appropriate and there was limited supervision of the activities".

"The welfare of all detainees, including children, is of paramount importance to the department," the statement added.

"While this specific program has ceased, Serco will continue to offer excursions and activities in a safe and controlled manner.

"The department continues to work with organisations formerly involved in delivering this program."

Sister Brigid said there were never any incidents or escape attempts on the outings. "The outings were amazingly free from any incident. The people were so pleased to be out and about," she said. "Most of the kids don't want to go with the officers, who are seen to be 'security' people."

Children in detention 'need stimulation'

Sister Brigid said children in particular become very bored when held in detention. "Kids need a lot of stimulation," she said.

"Just having other kids to play with, having things to do that are outside the norm ... it's so absolutely important for the welfare of these kids."

Sister Brigid said one little girl fell in love with a goat at the Collingwood Children's Farm. "That was a magical day. We'd gone to the Collingwood Children's Farm and that little girl was very quiet.

"Then when we went around to different animals she was a bit excited, but when we got to the goat, she just loved that goat.

"She just fell in love with that goat."

Sister Brigid said detention was starting to have a negative impact on the 17 children held at MITA.

She said she had talked to an "incredibly caring" parent of a three-year-old boy held in detention who was concerned at changes they were seeing in their child.

"We don't know what to do with him, he just gets so angry these days," she recalled the parent as saying.

Rules becoming 'more draconian under guise of security'

Victorian senator John Madigan said his office had placed a call to Mr Dutton's office "to seek clarification" on the status of the Brigidine Sisters' project.

"I'm totally bewildered ... as to what the hell is happening here," Senator Madigan said.

He said he could not understand what problem could be with taking children out of the detention centre for excursions to places like the Collingwood Children's Farm.

"Some would say it's a form of torture to have them cooped up," the senator said.

Sister Brigid said the rules at the detention centre were becoming "more draconian ... under the guise of security".

She described the conditions for detainees at MITA as "worse than a prison".

"They don't know when they're going to get out, what they're going to get out to - it's just an awful, awful situation," she said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-02/nuns-day-trips-for-children-in-detention-halted-by-border-force/6993808>

13. Grog gift to detainees behind ban on outings

Katherine Towers
The Australian
December 4, 2015 12:00AM

An innocent incident involving an unopened gift hamper two years ago is behind Australian Border Force's shock decision to scrap a popular day-release program for detainees run by a group of Melbourne nuns.

The Brigidine Sisters have hit back at allegations by ABF that adult detainees accessed alcohol and prescription drugs during approved day-release programs, forcing the "discontinuance" of the outings with nuns.

Sister Brigid Arthur, the nun behind the program, which takes adults detainees on day outings and children on school holiday excursions, said she was only aware of one incident two years ago where husband and wife detainees were given a wrapped gift hamper by an Australian family while out on day release.

She said the couple did not unwrap the hamper and upon returning to the Melbourne Immigration and Transit Accommodation Centre handed over the gift for inspection. Guards found a bottle of alcohol.

Sister Brigid said the couple had no idea there was alcohol in the hamper and she questioned ABF's motivation in bringing up the incident now. "That happened two years ago, and I answered for that at the time and they seemed satisfied," she said.

The Australian revealed yesterday that a successful four-year-long school holiday program run by the nuns to take children in detention on excursions to the zoo, beach and local playgrounds had been suddenly stopped by ABF. The Brigidine nuns were not officially told the program had been "discontinued" and were given no details or reasons behind the decisions when they heard it was not allowed to go ahead.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said yesterday there "were clearly some problems" with the program and that the department was working with the Brigidine Sisters over their continued involvement.

ABF Deputy Commissioner Michael Outram told The Australian yesterday that the program had been banned after the department became aware of adult detainees accessing alcohol and prescription medications during "at least two excursions" run by the nuns.

He said a review found there was limited scrutiny and accountability relating to excursion destinations, lack of full supervision of detainees while in the community and access to detainees by unauthorised people while they were in the community.

"The ABF considered these risks to potentially vulnerable detainees in its legal care, particularly children, to be unacceptable and suspended the excursions program pending a ... review."

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/immigration/grog-gift-to-detainees-behind-ban-on-outings/story-fn9hm1gu-1227633112848>

14. Controversial Border Force takes control of detention centres, turns them into 'jails'

Sydney Morning Herald
December 4, 2015 - 12:07PM
Nicole Hasham

The Australian Border Force has taken control of the nation's immigration detention centres, implementing a "command and control" regime that has allegedly overseen the hand-cuffing of mentally ill detainees travelling to counselling and banning outings for children.

The Border Force, the military-style government outfit which in August proposed random visa checks that forced a Melbourne police operation to be aborted, confirmed it has taken "a more active role" in managing onshore detention centres since the force was established in July. This includes a "more uniform approach to managing the safety and security of detainees".

The Border Force this week confirmed it had cancelled a program run by nuns at the Melbourne Immigration and Transit Accommodation centre [MITA], which involved taking children outside the facility for picnics, ice-cream and trips to the playground or the zoo.

A Border Force spokesman said the outings also involved adult detainees and were scrapped due to "lack of proper oversight". He said community excursions still occur, supervised by trained staff.

Refugee advocate Pamela Curr said security provisions in detention centres such as MITA were "being stepped up to an unbelievable level" and detainees say "every day a new rule is being brought in".

She said one badly ill man with poor kidney function was restrained during a visit to a specialist doctor, which prevented him from giving a urine sample because "the guards would not undo the handcuffs".

Another man was forced to undergo a hand X-ray while wearing handcuffs and women leaving the detention centre for a medical appointment or counselling were forced to undergo pat-downs, Ms Curr said.

"That means women guards run their hands over their breasts, their bottom, their legs," she said, saying this had induced panic attacks in detainees with a history of being sexually abused.

Ms Curr said a fence more than four metres high had been built at MITA, and "children are now virtually living in a prison".

Visiting time was now highly regulated and children leaving the centre to attend school were accompanied by uniformed guards, causing them to be ridiculed by other children, she said. The Border Force confirmed a perimeter fence had been improved after a number of escapes from MITA, and did not deny the other allegations.

Amnesty International Australia refugee coordinator Graham Thom said security in detention centres was also heightened after detainees with criminal histories flooded the system.

Under recent laws, people can have their visas cancelled if they have been sentenced to 12 months or more in prison.

"We have great concerns about what that is doing to safety, and the increased security and therefore the mental health of asylum seekers in detention," Dr Thom said.

Dr Thom said he had heard anecdotal reports of a more "hands on" approach to security, including towards mentally ill detainees.

"Not only are people more routinely being handcuffed but ... while they are outside the centre, a staff person has to have a physical hand on the individual when taking them to counselling," he said.

"You can only imagine the increased stress and pressure that puts on somebody."

Refugee advocate Jane Healey said there had been a "marked" increase in security under Border Force, including greater force towards detainees, more asylum seekers being placed in isolation and tighter visitor security.

The Border Force spokesman said it took a "compassionate approach to the care of those in detention".

"The ABF and its service providers work together in the management of detention centres, with security and safety of detainees, personnel and visitors the key priority," he said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/controversial-border-force-takes-control-of-detention-centres-turns-them-into-jails-20151203-gle710.html>

15. Indonesian captain makes US\$32,000 deal to return asylum seekers, court hears

Yohanis Humiang alleges he was taken aboard an Australian navy ship where he negotiated the payment so as not to go home 'empty-handed'

The Guardian
Agence France-Presse
Wednesday 2 December 2015 17.39 AEDT

The captain of an asylum-seeker boat allegedly intercepted by the Australian navy has told a court how he negotiated a hefty payment to take the migrants back to Indonesia to avoid going home "empty-handed".

The Indonesian captain, Yohanis Humiang, 35, is on trial charged with people-smuggling after Australian officials allegedly stopped his boat in May and paid him and his crew US\$32,000 to return to Indonesia.

Five crew members are also being tried separately on Rote Island in eastern Indonesia. All six face a minimum of five and a maximum of 15 years in jail.

Claims that Australia paid to turn the asylum seekers back to Indonesia renewed tensions over migrant boats.

Humiang told the court how his boat, carrying 65 mostly Sri Lankan migrants, was intercepted as it tried to head to New Zealand, and he was taken aboard an Australian navy ship.

"I was interrogated," Humiang told the court on Tuesday. He said he negotiated for 30 minutes with officials before the payment was agreed.

"The money was given to us to take the migrants back to Indonesia, and to be honest I need the money – that's the very reason I took this job.

"I can't go home empty-handed."

Humiang said he and one senior crew member got US\$6,000 each, and US\$20,000 was divided between the four other crew members.

He took the money and agreed to take the migrants back to Indonesia, as he had not yet been paid by the people-smuggler who had arranged the trip to New Zealand.

In June, after his arrest, Humiang had told how the crew and migrants were not allowed to make the return journey in their own boat, which was seized by the Australians, but were put into two "unseaworthy" wooden vessels.

The crew and migrants arrived on a small island near Rote after being turned back.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/dec/02/indonesian-captain-makes-us32000-deal-to-return-asylum-seekers-court-hears>

16. Broadspectrum's Diane Smith-Gander eyes protesters via Facebook and Twitter

Sydney Morning Herald
December 2, 2015 - 8:12AM
Sally Rose

Broadspectrum chairwoman Diane Smith-Gander has revealed the refugee camp operator's most senior personnel keep track of activists and proxy advisers by monitoring their Facebook and Twitter profiles.

The company, formerly named Transfield Services, has turned to social media surveillance to help it cope with protests over claims of human rights abuses inside the government's offshore asylum seeker processing centres on Nauru and Manus Island that the company has a critical \$2.2 billion contract to operate.

"Over the recent period with Broadspectrum we were dealing with activists who were trying to use us as a tool of change in government policy, which was not our role and clearly not a debate we were going to step in to," Ms Smith-Gander said.

In August HESTA, one of the largest superannuation funds in the country, announced it had dumped its \$23 million stake in the company citing evidence of abuse inside the detention camps. Other super funds including Christian Super, First State Super and NGS Super have also divested, amid rising protests from members and unions.

Ahead of the annual general meeting on October 17, which was publicly targeted by social activists No Business in Abuse and GetUp!, company secretary Angelique Nesbitt took charge to make sure the chairwoman was not caught by surprise when a banner was unfurled and her speech to shareholders interrupted.

"People have asked me how I kept my cool, but I wasn't surprised at all because the company secretary had been working with our security people matching Facebook pages, Twitter feeds and so forth and the names of people registered as proxies," she said.

"So I knew who the proxy holders who were going to get up and try and disrupt the meeting were."

Broadspectrum regularly uses social media to scout out likely troublemakers ahead of other public events, Ms Smith-Gander revealed.

"Likewise I gave a speech at the University of Western Australia and there were activists in that room and the same thing. The attendance list had been washed against the Facebook page and a security person was positioned to identify that person when they came in," she said.

"I was handed a piece of paper that said 'It's Taylor17 she's the person in the red leather jacket'."

Monitoring social media to know who is likely to disrupt a speech is not within the traditional job description of the company secretary, whose role it is to work with both management and the board to provide independent oversight of corporate governance standards.

Ms Smith-Gander made the comments to the Governance Institute of Australia's annual conference in Melbourne on Tuesday morning.

BHP Billiton company secretary Margaret Taylor spoke on the same panel.

The mining giant is facing a \$7 billion lawsuit from Brazil following a disaster at its Samarco joint venture last month that destroyed 10 districts, killed at least a dozen people and according to a United Nations report "killed a river".

Ms Taylor declined to comment on the crisis but revealed she is speaking to chairman Jac Nasser "more often than usual".

The Governance Institute announced on Tuesday the appointment of Australian Foundation Investment Company company secretary Simon Pordage as its new president. Mr Pordage was previously deputy company secretary for ANZ Banking Group and, prior to that, head of board support for Barclays PLC in the United Kingdom.

<http://www.smh.com.au/business/broadspectrums-diane-smithgander-eyes-protestors-via-facebook-and-twitter-20151130-glbdbl.html>