

Anglesea Heathlands

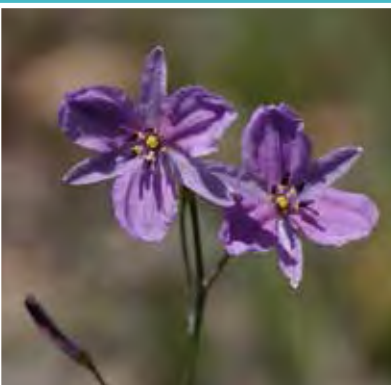


Southern Emu-wren in the Anglesea heathlands. Photo: Geoff Gates

TIME TO PROTECT A NATIONAL TREASURE



Anglesea Grevillea



Chocolate Lily



Flying Duck Orchid



Pink Heath

Produced by the Geelong Environment Council with support from the Victorian National Parks Association, ANGAIR and the Friends of Eastern Otways.

Anglesea heathlands, time to protect a national treasure

Despite being home to some of the richest and most biologically diverse habitat in the world the Anglesea heathlands have for years been threatened by increased mining activity by aluminium giant Alcoa.

A global company, Alcoa has operated an open cut mine and power station at Anglesea since 1968, generating electricity to power its Point Henry aluminium smelter.

Alcoa's lease over the heathlands was granted in 1961, long before the incredibly high botanical significance of the region was recognised.

Yet even after discovering just how environmentally significant the heathlands are Alcoa maintained plans to mine a further 300ha of this fragile, heritage-listed site.

Now that Alcoa has announced the closure of the smelter, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to protect the heathlands by including them as part of the Great Otway National Park.

If we don't act now a new owner could take over the lease, expand mining as part of export coal operations that could result in many more trucks on the road, further loss of the Anglesea heathlands, and a downturn in local tourism, which relies so heavily on the area's natural beauty to draw tourists from around the world.

Worth protecting

For over 20 years the extraordinary, rich heathlands at Anglesea in Victoria have been listed on the Register of the National Estate as a place worth protecting, forever.

The listing reflects the fact that the area contains the most diverse mix of native bushland found in Victoria, home to 700 different plant species and a third of all Victorian orchids.



Photo: Elizabeth Donoghue
www.elizabethdonoghuephotography.com

TIME FOR A DECISION

The closure of the Anglesea power station gives us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to protect the Anglesea heathlands by making them part of the Great Otway National Park.

It's time for the Victorian Government to:

- Close the coal mine.
- Shut down the power station.
- Add the 7000ha of Anglesea heathlands in the Great Otway National Park.

Four of the plants found in the heathlands are found nowhere else on Earth – the Anglesea Grey Gum, Anglesea Grevillea and two orchids.

The heath is also incredibly important for a range of endangered wildlife, including the Yellow-bellied Glider, endangered Southern Brown Bandicoot and White-footed Dunnart.

Birdlife is prolific. A walk in the heathlands offers visitors the chance to spot more than 100 different bird species, such as a pair of Powerful Owls, the Grey Goshawk, threatened Rufous Bristlebirds.

A vision for the future

Our vision for Anglesea is for the Great Otway National Park to be expanded to include the Anglesea heathland, making it one of the most significant, beautiful and diverse national parks in Victoria.

The mine and power station must be decommissioned, the site decontaminated, repaired and revegetated.

The site could then become a tourism and education hub for students, natural history enthusiasts and tourists and become a destination at the start of the Great Ocean Road.

Donate

This brochure was created by the Geelong Environment Council, a regional conservation organisation that was responsible for the National Estate listing of the Anglesea Heath in 1990. You can contact us on 0417 100 206 or by emailing gecinc@bigpond.com. If you would like to make a donation cheques and money orders can be sent to PO Box 771, Belmont, Victoria 3216.

Salmon Sun Orchid. Photo: Margaret MacDonald



The open cut mine at Anglesea is surrounded by rare heathlands that are home to a third of all orchid species found in Victoria.

Coal mine threatens unique ecosystems

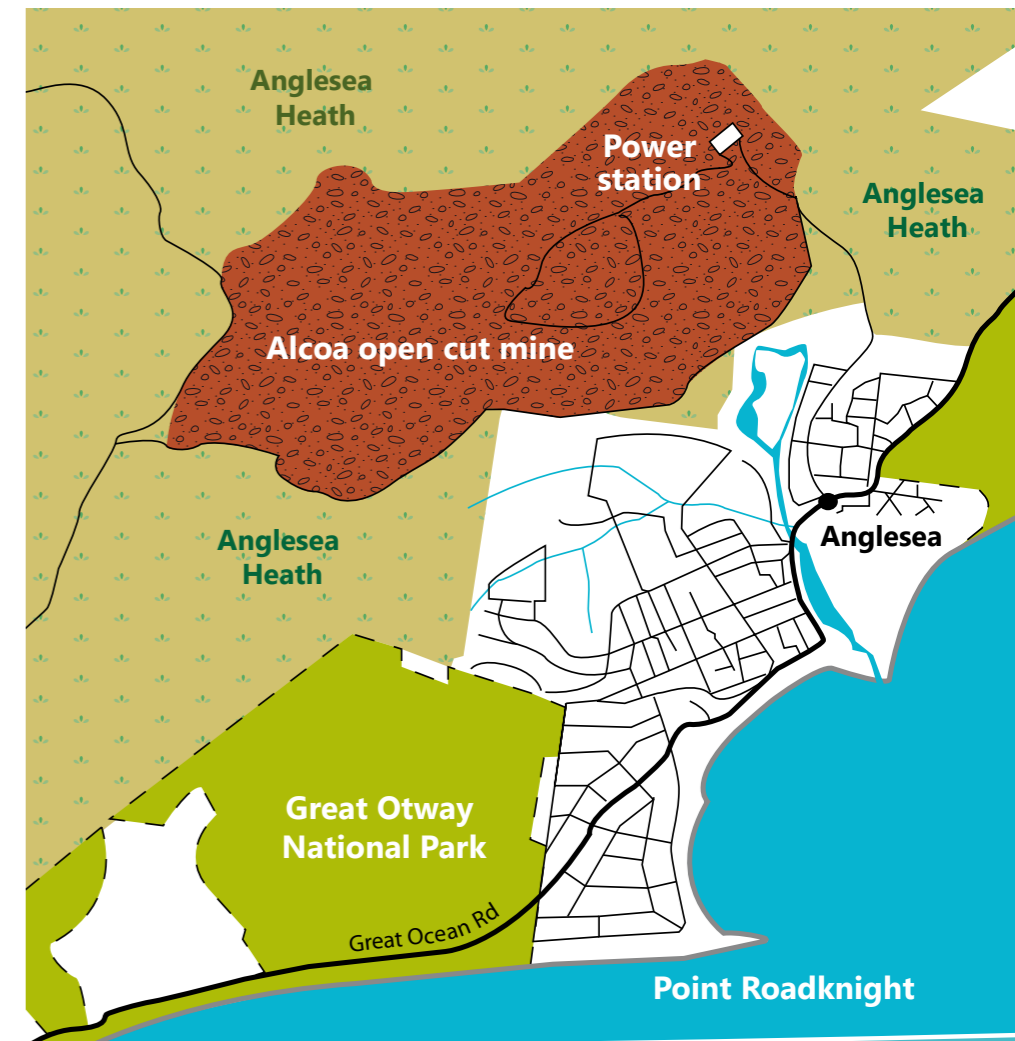
In 2011 the Victorian Government renewed Alcoa's lease over 7000 hectares of Anglesea heathland for a second 50 year period, thumbing its nose at community support for the heath to be added to the adjoining Great Otway National Park.

But with the closure of the Point Henry smelter it is time to close the polluting power station at Anglesea and its destructive coal mine.

Continued coal mining would mean ongoing destruction of diverse and valuable ecosystems, the loss of threatened plant and animal species as the mine expands into untouched vegetation.

The 2014 coal mine fire at Morwell highlights the risk to communities and the environment when open cut mines catch fire. The Anglesea mine is less than half a kilometre from the town centre. A self-ignited fire or one caused by an escaped burn carried out in the nearby heathlands would post a grave risk to the local community.

The Anglesea coal mine and power station must be shut down and decommissioned by Alcoa, and the site cleaned and rehabilitated by the company.



Striated Fieldwren.
Photo: Geoff Gates



Time to shut down toxic mine

The Alcoa Anglesea brown coal mine and power station emit a toxic cocktail of pollutants, including particulates that are recognised carcinogens, sulphur dioxide, arsenic, lead and mercury.

On 2 June 2014 federal environment minister Greg Hunt said in Parliament: "Particulate pollution is a killer, and we need to address this issue. I know that the member for Corangamite has raised this issue with me directly as well as in public and there are those with deep concerns in areas such as Anglesey. (sic)"

The sulphur dioxide emissions at Anglesea are appalling and have seen the seaside town named one of 12 National Air Pollution hotspots by Environmental Justice Australia. Other National Air Pollution hot spots include Mount Isa and Port Pirie.

The power plant at Anglesea is now the equal third highest emitter of sulphur dioxide in Australia, beaten only by the Bayswater power station in the Hunter Valley and Loy Yang in the Latrobe Valley.

Even the notoriously polluting Hazelwood power plant in the Latrobe Valley produces just a third of the sulphur dioxide emitted by Anglesea, despite

producing ten times the power.

The World Health Organisation, the United States EPA and the Principal Scientist of our own EPA have all said there is no safe level of exposure to sulphur dioxide, especially for vulnerable groups such as asthmatics.

While sulphur dioxide affects the vulnerable within minutes, Alcoa is allowed to report average levels under its license and refuses to release real-time data so that we can see what's actually happening in Anglesea.

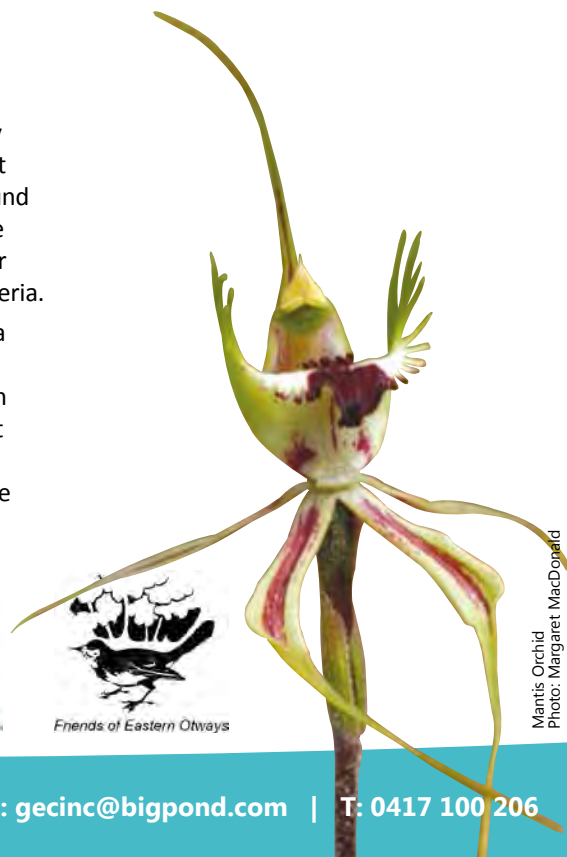
Proven sulphur dioxide scrubbing technology would dramatically reduce Anglesea's emissions, but Alcoa has failed to invest to install the technology at Anglesea. This is despite the fact that Alcoa's own engineering consultant found that sulphur dioxide scrubbers could be installed at Anglesea back in 2008, after having considered all of Alcoa's key criteria.

To make matters worse the Anglesea coal mine and power plant are located close to homes and a primary school. In 2014 no community should have to put up with this profligate pollution from a company that has no further use for the facility. It's time to shut it down.

Take action

Write to your local MP and the Premier of Victoria, urging them to:

- Protect for ever the Anglesea heathlands by immediately revoking the Alcoa lease and including the whole area in the Great Otway National Park.
- Shut for ever the Anglesea mine and power station to protect the town's residents and visitors from further pollution, and the heathland from further destruction.



Mantis Orchid
Photo: Margaret MacDonald



**Geelong
Environment Council**

