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Making green extreme: defending fossil fuel hegemony through citizen exclusion

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ABSTRACT

By marking protests as violent and protesters as extremists, politicians and governments around the world have reclassified citizens' environmental engagement. Government rhetoric and accompanying legislative amendments establish a baseline by which citizens – and their causes – are excluded and discounted. This article contributes to understanding how environmental protesters and their activities are constructed as dangerous through analysis of recent legislation and surrounding debate in Queensland, Australia. This legislation sought to curb particular forms of protest in the name of protecting public order. These legislative responses are illustrative of how the Australian economy's reliance on fossil fuel extraction is protected from critique. We show how the contestation of resource extraction is escalated by politicians to the level of a threat to the nation. While the state's regulation of protests helps to protect the object of protest – in this case the fossil fuel industry – we demonstrate how such legislation is also shaped by the futures and logics promoted by the industry.

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Introduction

In 2015, 'Karen', 'a soldier for the environment', was introduced as a threat to Australia. 'Karen' was a fictional case study in the Australian Government's handbook, *Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation in Australia*, created to warn the Australian population of radicalized environmental activists and to help in identifying their activities. Karen's status as a violent extremist was framed by the Government around her environmental activism as a forest blockader in which she was presented as 'barricading areas that were being logged, spiking trees, and sabotaging machinery' and which resulted in her being arrested for 'trespass, damaging property, assault and obstructing police'.¹ Readers were told Karen never meant to injure anyone, but importantly, this intent was moot because violence occurred in the pursuit of ideological goals, marking Karen as a dangerous extremist.

The depiction of 'Karen' as a violent eco-warrior was widely criticized at the time by environmentalists, the media and researchers (Gerrard 2016; Nolan 2016). However, this example of the Government's characterisation of environmental protest highlights

a broader phenomenon evident across settler colonial states in an era of worsening climate crisis, in which the state and capital increasingly frame environmental activism as extreme, violent and a threat to democratic society (Potter 2011).

In this paper, we focus on the increasingly punitive legislative response to environmental protest within the Australian state of Queensland and demonstrate how the securing of critical infrastructure – in the name of protecting the state – narrows the rights of citizens (Cowen 2014). In recent years, Queensland officials have joined other settler colonial jurisdictions in using the language of violent extremism to criticize growing environmental protests against coal mine expansion (Monaghan and Walby 2017; Spice 2018). Our analysis focuses on various public documents surrounding amendments to Queensland's *Summary Offences Act* which sought to criminalise environmental protest. This included a review of the public hearing transcripts; submissions from environmental activists, corporations, and industry groups; and the Government's Explanatory Notes. These documents were read alongside public statements from state and federal politicians in the news, social media, and government press releases. These documents were contextualised through careful attention to official statements and legal strategies from Traditional Owners opposing one of the mining projects, along with the aims and tactics articulated by environmental protesters in publicly available media statements.

We explore the tension between the corporate-government-fossil fuel nexus on one hand and Aboriginal land rights and environmental protestors on the other. It is important to avoid collapsing the struggles for land rights with those of environmental protestors, which have different implications for the settler colonial state. Our discussion of the legislative response is situated within the framework of citizenship and exclusion in order to consider the role of the state in the maintenance of fossil fuel hegemony. The legislation's focus on protest actions that disrupt circulation via blockades gives insight into the links between the mobility of fossil fuels and the settler state's governance through infrastructure (Cowen 2014; Dafnos 2020). The suggestion that fossil fuel opposition poses a threat to Australia's public order has serious implications for democratic participation as well as the transition to a low carbon economy.

Settler colonial citizenship and protecting the state through exclusion

In his writings on citizenship and exclusion, Balibar (2012) focuses on how the label of violence – particularly of extreme violence – gives license to exclude individuals from full participation in civil society. Similarly, Mehta highlights how citizenship, particularly as an extension of universalising liberal ideals, has exclusion firmly embedded in it 'in such a manner so as politically to disenfranchise various people' (Mehta 1999, 47). These practices of exclusion are rooted in colonial epistemologies that define and simultaneously shape who can and cannot belong within the nation-state based on their perceived capacity to participate within the state's liberal norms. Exclusion from citizenship has historically relied upon notions of nationality or race (Balibar 2012; Moreton-Robinson 2015).

As Crosby (2021) explains, 'to eliminate Indigeneity, colonial infrastructural systems and dispossessive technologies also sought to produce an exalted (white) . . . subject'. Like other scholars of extractive colonial infrastructures (Dafnos 2020; Bonilla 2017;

Pasternak and Dafnos 2018), Crosby demonstrates how infrastructure projects facilitate state and corporate expansion through mechanisms that transform Indigenous land – linking the capacity to profit with a re-instantiation of state control over territory (see also Hansen and Stepputat 2006; Coulthard 2014). The move to dismiss Indigenous land claims by ‘securing’ infrastructure and resources enables settler colonial states to continually assert their sovereignty and their reach on Indigenous land (Sturm 2017; Bhandar 2018). Those who challenge this possession – in particular, Aboriginal people and environmental protesters – find themselves positioned as threats to the state and its ability to expand through its facilitation of fossil fuel extraction and circulation (Ceric 2020). Indigenous land rights claims challenge the expansionist logics of settler colonial infrastructures at the core of fossil fuel economies and are another site for the state to seek the ‘securitization of “critical infrastructure”’ (Pasternak and Dafnos 2018, 741).

While strategies for the exclusion and dispossession of Indigenous peoples have long been central to the possibilities of sovereignty in a colonial system (Kauanui 2008; Moreton-Robinson 2015; Bhandar 2018) such techniques are also applied towards other distinctions within national populations (Irving 2019). Volpp (2007) has shown how exclusion is constructed through the notion of difference and opposition, suggesting citizenship and belonging require the production of a ‘non-citizen’ marked for exclusion. Balibar (1988) suggests citizenship works to denote two distinctions: ‘it is bound to the existence of a state and therefore to a principle of public sovereignty, and it is bound to the acknowledged exercise of an individual “capacity” to participate in political decisions’ (723). Yet, for Balibar (2012), the capacity to participate is derived from processes of becoming, or what he calls subjectivation, reasserting categories of exclusion and inclusion. This, according to Rodd (2018) is a process; democracy and citizenship are co-constituted, not fixed categories – their meanings are perpetually re-made via contestations over the right to the state and the limits of participation. These participatory boundaries are policed as integral to the state’s historical and ongoing colonial legacies which rely on the continual expansion of the state’s ‘frontier’ through transformative infrastructure projects that displace Indigenous peoples while securing property for the state and profits for corporations (Dafnos 2020, see also Whyte 2017).

Citizenship is not just a category that offers the capacity to engage, but a political technique or instrument that continues to define what a ‘good citizen’ might be. This emboldens the state to simultaneously define the limits of those claims and exclude those whose demands or actions exceed the boundaries of acceptability (Bigo, 2007). As such, surveillance and exclusion are forces of power that create new relational forms – emphasizing the ‘positive side of power’ and ‘the normalization of population as a constraint’ for forms of governing (Bigo, 2007, 7). However, issues of citizenship and sovereignty are not merely about the right to have rights, but about the sovereign right to exclude a subject from rights (Agamben 1998).

Writings on the concept of ‘good citizenship’ have sought to extend this work beyond the scope of the state itself by focusing on how citizenship is governed in conjunction with non-state actors (see de Koning, Jaffe, and Koster 2015). The productive capacities of inclusion simultaneously give insight into how exclusion refines the limits of belonging via a tension between deviancy and normalcy. As Cowen (2014, 62) has thoroughly explored, the political emphasis on protecting ‘the circulation of stuff’ is particularly visible in the ‘practical efforts that have emerged to protect these circulation systems and

the radical implications they have for citizenship and security'. As such, supply chain security and the mobility of fossil fuels are folded into the state's security apparatus and, where disruption is a central risk, supply chain security has the task of 'mitigat(ing) vulnerability' – protecting infrastructure along with the circulation of capital and fossil fuels from 'disruptive people' (Cowen 2014, 78–9).

For Monaghan and Walby, the positioning of environmental protesters as 'outsiders' occurs through critical infrastructure protection, which 'has become the principle venue for the petro-security apparatus to merge private interests of energy corporations with national security agencies' (Monaghan and Walby 2017, 63). This fusion facilitates policing that positions blockaders as extremists operating in opposition to economic interests, violating the norms of 'democratic conduct' and jeopardising the extractive industry perceived to be critical to the economy (Monaghan and Walby 2017, 61). Invoking the language of extremism and terrorism has significant implications for how participatory rights are afforded or rescinded based on the risk an individual or group may pose to the state and its citizens. Thus, the capacity to define problems sanctions the disciplinary force between the state and its citizens (Rose 2000, 324). In our context, the disruption of the circulation of fossil fuels is labelled deviant; it is seen to pose a risk to the health of the national economy and the strength of the state (see also Pasternak and Dafnos 2018).

Citizens who violate these norms risk having their citizenry capacities and rights revoked. It is on these grounds Balibar speaks of how categorical differences maintain 'the pressure of a discourse of "society to be defended" and collectively obsessed by some kind of perversity looming' (Balibar 2012, 214). Such a discourse necessarily requires the definition then, not only of the characteristics of 'perversity', but that of the society to be defended. When applying this framework to the politics and policing of fossil fuel infrastructure – Cowen's (2014) writing on the securitisation of logistics helps to contextualise how the disruption of transportation becomes a threat to national security. Linking the history of business logistics to the history of military force, Cowen explores how the centrality of circulation in global markets has necessitated an approach to supply chain security (SCS) that repositions the state's security apparatus. She suggests 'rather than territorial borders at the edge of national space guaranteeing the sovereignty of the nation-state, a new cartography of security aims to protect global networks of circulations' – a shift positioning infrastructure blockades as not just costly, but also a national and global security threat (Cowen 2014, 69). As Cowen's work illuminates, the contemporary focus on logistics perpetuates the dispossession of Indigenous peoples around the world in the name of securing the global circulations of goods and capital. It is on this point we move to analyse the hegemony of fossil fuels in Australia.

Hegemony and fossil fuels in Australia

The hegemonic position of fossil fuels, and, specifically the coal industry, is embedded in the early history of Australia's colonization. The mining, export, and use of coal was established in 1801 by the Governor of New South Wales and mining carried out by soldiers and convicts (Baer 2016). Thus, the very first development of the industry was embedded within the settler colonial state, within which participation was directly controlled by government officials. While much of the industry has since been privatised,

these early links established the industry as a hegemonic force in the nation-state that has consistently resisted increasing social and environmental pressures for a transition to a low carbon economy (Baer 2016).

This resistance has been prominently documented: from the revelation industry representatives were writing briefing papers for the government in the early 2000s (Pearse 2007), to the sustained resistance to a price on carbon emissions, it is clear climate regulation in Australia has been fiercely and successfully fought by the industry and its allies in politics (Crowley 2017; Curran 2011). This bipartisan support for the industry has been held together through links between government and industry, and a shared discourse of coal as the basis for Australia's economic system and prosperity (Nyberg, Spicer, and Wright 2013; Yacoumis 2018). Thus, for more than 200 years the fossil fuel industry has held a hegemonic position whereby environmental and social concerns have been sidelined.

According to Gramsci (1971), hegemony – the dominance of one group or set of interests over another – cannot be explained through economic power or coercion; rather, it is maintained through the social and cultural institutions in which moral and intellectual leadership produce consent. As Laclau and Mouffe emphasize, the production of this consent is contingent; a process that becomes particularly visible in moments of crisis (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 7). Contingency provides an avenue for social change in which existing hegemonic blocs might be altered. This process involves, on the one hand, creating a logic of difference with those opposed and, on the other, a logic of equivalence between those with similar interests. In the case of fossil fuels, the growth of global concerns about climate change poses a threat to this hegemony.

There seems little doubt the sector has found itself in a moment of crisis in which its hegemony is under threat, both from companies and nation-states committing to net-zero targets as well as the rise of new social movements. We suggest that the response to these threats – in particular the tensions around citizenship, protest and exclusion – give insight into the maintenance of fossil fuel hegemony in Australia. These tensions are at the core of hegemonic constructs, which require an oppositional force in order to create clear boundaries around inclusion and exclusion, and to mark out perceived threats or constructed crises. The crisis of a transition away from fossil fuels is demonstrated here in the state's response to protests – one which escalates and pushes forward the fossil fuel hegemony in Australia through coercion. This shift towards authoritarianism reveals an anxiety about the potential for energy transitions and the move away from fossil fuels (Daggett 2018). As a means of examining these tensions, we begin by exploring how protest actions in Queensland have been portrayed as a 'crisis' to which the state must respond; an approach that subsequently raises new questions about the expectations for participation and the role of fossil fuels in the governance of the Australian state.

The political framing of 'extremist' environmental protest

Including environmental protests in the Australian Government's 2015 publication *Preventing Violent Extremism and Radicalisation in Australia* highlighted a broader trend of delegitimising environmentalism in an era of growing public concern over climate change (Potter 2011). For those seeking to defend the existing economic order, growing climate activism threatens not only fossil fuel corporations but also those in

government and businesses benefiting from continued fossil fuel extraction. In response, the defence of the fossil fuel industry's hegemony has involved not only campaigning and public relations (Nyberg, Spicer, and Wright 2013) but also more coercive, legislative measures aimed at curtailing environmental protest. A key example of this was the Queensland Government's 2019 *Summary Offences Bill* which sought to deter environmental protest against coal expansion.

This Bill was a response to a protest movement opposing the construction of a controversial new mega-coal mine in Queensland's Galilee Basin located on the land of the Wangan and Jagalingou people. Energy conglomerate the Adani Group purchased the coal licenses in 2010, proposing Australia's largest coal mine, which would be the first development in the Galilee Basin. A growing national protest movement emerged attracting significant national and international attention under the name #StopAdani (Colvin 2020).

In 2016, Adani secured an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) for the mine, but it faced court challenges from a group of Wangan and Jagalingou people seeking to assert Indigenous land rights that would block it. Ultimately, the ILUA challenges were dismissed by a federal court, which ordered the group of Wangan and Jagalingou people to pay Adani's \$600,000 in legal fees.² The company pursued these costs from Wangan and Jagalingou people's senior spokesperson Adrian Burragubba, which ultimately bankrupted him in 2019 – a status that blocks him from bringing future cases against the mining company.³ It is here we begin to see how the settler state strengthens its control of territory through expansionist fossil fuel projects (Moreton-Robinson 2015; Bhandar 2018).

While the Wangan and Jagalingou people sought to use legal pathways of claiming Indigenous land rights to maintain possession of their land, environmental activists were seeking other pathways for disrupting fossil fuel expansion. In January 2018, environmental activist network Frontline Action on Coal (FLAC) posted images of blockades of the rail line that would service the Adani Carmichael mine. FLAC, which described itself as 'committed to community-led, non-violent direct action' in pursuit of climate justice, had been at the forefront of direct action campaigns to stop the Adani Carmichael mine.⁴ FLAC's Facebook posts depicted devices called 'dragon's dens' – devices, usually comprised of pipes with handcuffs inside, which were used by protestors to lock themselves to equipment or in a human chain to block roads and train lines. By attaching themselves to infrastructure or other protesters, police could not quickly remove the protestors. The devices, which delay and disrupt commodity circulation through the blocking of critical infrastructures, would later become a key focus for the legislative changes.

In 2019, Extinction Rebellion, a global movement advocating for action on climate change, organised a number of protests in Brisbane, Queensland, causing significant disruption throughout the city's central business district as protesters blocked streets and traffic.⁵ In July that year, Australian Senators from a range of political parties put forth a motion in Federal Parliament 'condemn(ing) the actions and hypocrisy of extremist protestors'.⁶ In the weeks following, Queensland Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk, repeated this descriptor when promising 'new laws to combat extremist protesters' whose tactics she dubbed 'sinister', stating '(b)locking roads is dangerous, reckless, irresponsible,

selfish and stupid'.⁷ Minister for Police, Mark Ryan, echoed this framing of protesters: 'What we are seeing now from these extremists is a flagrant disregard for the law and the rights of others ... This is contrary to the shared values of our democratic society'.⁸

Here, protesters were branded as extremists and their actions marked out by state officials as violating the standards of public participation on the basis of a potential for violence. The purported threat of violence raised the stakes and invoked the idea the protestors posed a risk to the community and the state. This rhetoric sought to place protesters outside of the bounds of good citizenship on the basis they violated participatory norms through their 'extremism'. This was perhaps most obvious in Minister Ryan's statement above as he positioned protesters as undertaking actions beyond democratic norms. Simultaneously, the Minister defined particular types of protest as illegitimate. In this context, the state (both at the federal and state level) relied on the spectre of violence or the threat of danger in order to mark out these actions as a violation necessitating the state's action in the name of protection.

In response to this 'danger', the Queensland Government introduced a bill to the state parliament setting out changes to the *Summary Offences Act*. This bill was approved by Parliament on 30 October 2019 containing provisions to restrict the use of devices that could be used to attach protesters to equipment or infrastructure hindering work or traffic, expanding the scope for warrantless police searches, and increasing sentencing requirements for individuals who used the now-labelled 'dangerous attachment devices'. The Government argued for the necessity of these amendments in the name of protecting citizens from the dangers and disruptions posed by environmental protestors.

While government officials reiterated the rights of Queenslanders to protest, the introduction of the Bill in Queensland's Parliament was justified on the basis that some protesters had demonstrated 'a complete disregard for others in the community' through their 'unlawful behaviour with potentially dangerous outcomes'.⁹ Indeed, the introductory notes for the proposed changes to the legislation specifically referenced protests over 'coal mining', 'the treatment of animals', and 'climate change' and aimed to:

deter people from using dangerous attachment devices that endanger themselves, emergency services workers and members of the public and to assist police officers in minimising the disruption caused to the community through the employment of these devices.¹⁰

The Bill was introduced almost exactly a month after the Premier had warned viewers on a popular morning television show: 'what the public aren't seeing is extremists who are putting themselves in danger and our emergency services staff in danger'.¹¹ By marking protesters as 'extremists' who engaged in 'dangerous' actions, there was a clear push to render these forms of protest as existing outside of the acceptable forms of public participation and in violation of the rules for engaging with Australia's democratic principles. So what exactly was sinister or dangerous about these tactics and what made them particularly threatening in the context of Queensland in 2019? In what follows, we seek to answer this question.

Understanding protest dangers

In the following sections, we examine the descriptions of danger, threat, and injury and situate these claims in the strategies and devices used during the protests. Over the course of our research we found media reports, mining sector press releases, and statements from Australian government officials coincided with the introduction of the Bill that presented the lock-on devices as dangerous and the protesters as a threat. However, the nomination of these devices as ‘dangerous’ demands interrogation on the basis that the Bill does not criminalize the actual possession of such devices, suggesting it is in the very disruption of infrastructure that threat is constructed. As such, we examine how the state and aligned actors in industry constructed environmental protests as a source of violence and danger requiring punitive intervention.

Definition of dangerous devices

The amendments to the *Summary Offences Act* outlined two types of disruption and their associated penalties in the context of the protests. The first outlaws the use of attachment devices to disrupt ‘the ordinary operation of transport infrastructure’.¹² The second use covered by the Bill focuses on the use of such devices to impede a person attempting to enter or exit a business or to ‘caus(e) a halt to the ordinary operation of plant or equipment because of concerns about the safety of any person’.¹³ Here again, the use of these devices was framed as problematic when they resulted in the restrictions on business or transportation and when the devices were encased in materials, regardless of whether or not the device was intended to injure.

The Bill’s initial definitions of devices were seemingly straightforward and made reference to intent. A device was deemed dangerous if it:

- a) reasonably appears to be constructed or modified to cause injury to a person who attempts to interfere with the device; or b) reasonably appears to be constructed or modified to cause injury to a person if another person interferes with the device; or c) incorporates a dangerous substance or thing.¹⁴

However, the Bill went on to say, ‘(a)lso, a sleeping dragon, dragon’s den, monopoly and tripod are each a dangerous attachment device’.¹⁵ Here, by specifically naming and defining these devices, the Bill bypassed questions of intent to harm present in the initial definitions of a dangerous device. That these devices were listed in addition to devices defined by their intent to harm or devices incorporating dangerous elements implied such devices might not otherwise fall under the category of dangerous. Thus, an activist’s intent – even when pursuing tactics typically described as non-violent or peaceful direct action – was moot if they used any of the four lock-on devices named in the Bill.

This labelling of devices functioned to include the protestors in the same category as those with intent to harm or endanger others without having to prove this; the act of possessing the device itself inscribes intent on the person. In Queensland, the state marked out these problems and sought to remedy them in the name of protection. The problem and the legislative responses were based on a configuration of particular protesters as extremists who were said to have introduced unacceptable levels of danger

and risk via their actions. This problem of so-called ‘extreme protesters’ highlighted the juxtaposition of the dangerous with the vulnerable in such a way that gave license to new forms of state intervention in the name of public safety.

Defining protesters as extremists

The claims the locking attachment devices posed a danger gave license to the Queensland Government’s invocation of extremism, which brought with it a state apparatus and logic of exclusion (see also Spice 2018; Dafnos 2020). Premier Palaszczuk accused activists of booby-trapping such devices with butane, glass, and other substances, which were said to pose risks to police officers tasked with removing the devices.¹⁶ Following these accusations, but prior to the Bill’s public hearing, Greens Party MP Michael Berkman asked Premier Palaszczuk to provide him with examples to support her claims. MP Berkman requested dates, information on how devices were designed to harm, and instances in which first responders were injured by these attachment devices. In response, the Premier made reference to a closed-door police briefing and declined to answer Berkman’s questions on the basis that doing so ‘would not be prudent’.¹⁷

When the Queensland Police Service testified at the hearings they spoke of the danger of encased attachment devices and attributed some of this to the stress faced by officers tasked with cutting through the devices in order to remove protesters. The stress was attributed to both the use of the tools, which was said to pose a risk to both the officers and the protesters, and the possibility someone might be injured during the removal process. When asked about instances in which police officers were harmed, Deputy Commissioner Codd from the Queensland Police Service referenced a singular incident of injury, which he described as ‘a relatively minor laceration’ treated on-site, with the officer continuing to work that day.¹⁸ However, the injury to this officer occurred *after* the Bill was announced and therefore the legislation was not in response to this injury.¹⁹

As part of the Queensland Police Service testimony, photo evidence was submitted of attachment devices utilised by protesters. When MP Berkman asked questions about the photos, the Queensland Police Service invoked Cabinet in Confidence with respect to the ‘time, date and place of each of the events depicted’.²⁰ While it is arguably plausible officers might find situations with protestors stressful, the lack of evidence of harm or danger suggests the depictions of protestors as posing a danger is linked to the ability to block the flow of fossil fuel infrastructure, and singles them out as a group deserving of increased surveillance. The act of defining particular devices, the accompanying protest tactics, and infrastructure disruption as dangerous reveals how it provided the capacity for reframing and dismissing the actions of the protesters who possessed them while securing the mobility of the industry and its subsequent ability to profit.

Excluding in the name of the economy

Both the examples of ‘Karen’ and the government response to environment protesters in Queensland provide insight into the way in which the state has reframed peaceful environmental protest as a danger to society and democracy (see also Brock 2020). In the context of Queensland, the call for protection indicates how Queensland’s resources are perceived as giving force to an economy in order to secure the state’s future. In what

follows, we show how the introduction of the protest laws has sought to prevent economic disruption and is linked to broader, liberal notions of citizenship and participation in the economy.

Costing the industry

Five times between December 2017 and January 2018, activists affiliated with the FLAC network blocked the Aurizon rail line to the Abbot Point coal terminal. At the time, Adani was in talks with Aurizon to access its rail line and haulage to the Abbot Point port. In its public submission on the Bill, Queensland Resources Council (QRC), the peak representative body for mineral and energy companies in Queensland, sought to emphasise its concerns about the sentencing of protesters.²¹ QRC was unsatisfied by the court outcomes, which they suggested did not go far enough to dissuade protesters.

In news articles and a QRC submission on the Bill, FLAC's rail-line stoppage was said to have cost Aurizon \$1.3 million dollars, estimating the company lost \$90,000 per train, per hour whenever such stoppages occurred.²² QRC stated, 'the true aim of illegal protests is to negatively impact the industry . . . the [Greenpeace] strategy is to increase the costs of doing business, and therefore impact investment attractiveness – particularly in the Gailee (*sic*) Basin'.²³ QRC's appeal to the Queensland state evidences Cowen's concern with the ways in which 'labor disruptions as a means to quantify "attacks" on the supply chain follows directly from the prior move of positing global trade as vital to national security' (Cowen 2014, 80). QRC subsequently transformed the loss of the private corporation's profits into the responsibility of the state to intervene and provide protection from the environmental protesters who were disrupting it.

QRC not only supported the Bill and the criminalisation of offenses, it called for harsher penalties for protesters and sought to expand the range of protest activities included as offenses in the Bill, seeking to have an organising offence added to the Bill to prevent coordinated activist action. The maximum sentencing guidelines QRC sought to have incorporated into the Bill were so long they would have allowed the Department of Home Affairs to consider revoking Australian citizenship for dual citizens charged under the proposed coordination offenses. The risk and the danger highlighted by QRC was not defined as intentional violence or harm to a *person*. Instead, QRC explicitly stated the intention was to 'negatively impact the *industry*' and to create challenges for mineral and resource companies seeking to raise capital.²⁴ The most significant danger, as outlined by QRC, focused on the industry, profits, and finance. These responses, in the name of protecting public order, are illustrative of how the Australian economy, based on resource extraction, is positioned as requiring state protection over and above the rights of citizens to engage in democratic protest. This configuration of the threat posed by protesters is perhaps most evident in the move to reframe them not as protesters, but as extremist subjects (see also Spiegel 2021; Brock and Dunlap 2018; Monaghan and Walby 2017).

We now turn to a closer analysis of the centrality of mining in the context of Australian governmental rationality to better understand how and why perceived threats to the industry demand state protection. Guiding this investigation is the question of what the intersections of violence, protection, and responsibility tell us about rights and inclusion – and subsequent exclusion – within the Australian state's technocratic apparatus of governance.

How good is mining?

Speaking at the QRC's annual lunch in 2019, Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, noted the importance of the resources industry in Australia. While touting the industry's economic contributions, Morrison linked the industry to the health of the nation. Adapting his campaign catchphrase – 'How good is ___!' – Morrison asked the room: 'How good is mining for Australia?'²⁵

The Prime Minister continued by answering his own question. He described mining as 'the backbone of so many communities in regional Australia, the source of jobs, economic livelihoods, and dignity – dignity for thousands of hard-working Queenslanders ...'²⁶ Morrison went on to suggest the sector's future and everything it provides is under attack from 'radical activism' and 'anarchism'. Describing some of the actions as 'economic sabotage dressed up as activism', Morrison promised new legislation to protect the industries and the country. Morrison pontificated on the sort of future protesters might seek as a way to contrast it with the benefits mining brought to the contemporary state.

The way in which Prime Minister Morrison laid out the problems of governing provides an example of how governance mechanisms and inclusion within the imagined (future) state might be mediated by non-state-actors. Morrison alluded to these apparatuses of governing and the components of national interest when he raised questions about what the future of Australia would look like in the absence of extractive industries. Morrison asked and then answered his question: 'Is that the sort of country we want? Of course not'. Through this rhetoric, the political leader of the country argued the imperative for the Australian Government was to intervene and protect the mining industry from its critics.

The QRC lunch presents a straightforward explanation of the perceived dangers of protests like those carried out by FLAC and Extinction Rebellion. The dangers and the risks outlined by Morrison are not the same as those cited by Queensland legislators as he makes no mention of physical violence or bodily harm. Declaring, 'we must protect our economy from this great threat', Morrison's concern focused entirely on the health of the industry, the values of Australia, and the sort of future he imagined for the country. By reading Morrison's speech and the Queensland legislation together, the calls for security tell us much more about what demands protection. The violence and harm is focused on economic risks, with challenges to extraction seen to pose a threat to the Australian state and collective well-being.

Morrison's statements connect fossil fuels and the health of the state at a time when Australian federal and state governments, banks, and extractive industries are facing pressure to act on climate change. Brock and Dunlap argue such forms of 'soft' counter-insurgency like public relations and corporate social responsibility – 'strategies to secure acceptance of, and pacify resistance against the mine' – work to obscure harder techniques focused on criminalising protesters; however, the two work together to protect the fossil fuel industry (Brock and Dunlap 2018, 34). As the Adani mine moves ahead, it is likely this dual strategy of criminalising resistance while centring the fossil fuel industry's contributions to the community and the nation will continue in response to challenges to the industry. In a submission to Federal Parliament, BMD Constructions, which holds contracts for work on the mine's rail line, explained its difficulties finding a company to insure its work on the project's critical infrastructure. BMD suggested 'failure to take any

action can only result in very few contractors being willing or able to undertake these critical infrastructure works', suggesting one option might be for the federal or state governments to secure this infrastructure development providing insurance 'to ensure the export industry is supported' – a connection which belies the entanglements of the industry and the state.²⁷

Democracy for whom?

Our analysis suggests the Australian and Queensland governments have linked the health of Australian democracy – and their ability to govern – with the interests of extractive industries such as coal mining. As we have noted, the government and the fossil fuel industry have sought to ensure fossil fuel hegemony through the securitisation of infrastructure, protecting it from environmental protesters and Traditional Owners whose presence may – in different ways – disrupt the industry. So long as fossil fuel infrastructure is linked to the national interests of the settler colonial state, those resisting or blocking its expansion will find themselves positioned outside of or beyond 'democratic conduct' (Monaghan and Walby 2017). In this context, we argue legislative strategies, like the ones described, effectively chill political participation and dissent in the name of industry interests and push against the boundaries of democracy. Yet, as Crosby suggests, this is perhaps a result of the indelible links between fossil fuels and the state, arguing 'critical infrastructure should be understood as a racialized technology of settler insecurity governance' (Crosby 2021, 31). Our case study illustrates this conjuncture in three ways; the depiction of environmentalists as 'bad' citizens; the linkage of the state with fossil fuels as 'the economy'; and finally, the reassertion of this as hegemony with the use of (legal) coercion.

As we have examined throughout this article, reconfiguring protesters and their practices as sites of risk and danger enables their displacement from pathways for engaging in the state itself. Balibar's (1988, 2012, 2015) theories of exclusionary citizenship provide a telling guide when security risks are portrayed as the disruption of particular industries and protests are seen to strike at the very core of the state's ability to govern. This is perhaps most explicitly visible in the rhetoric from state officials, which marks particular environment-focused protest actions as that of extremists. These kinds of framings are repeated in examples from other countries where the need for state protection appears less about reducing the risk to citizens as it is maintaining the financial interests of the resources sector (Potter 2011; Monaghan and Walby 2012). Spiegel makes this observation in the context of a Canadian prosecutor who suggested land and water defenders 'showed "no concern for the community" when they stood on the road to resist the pipeline expansion' (Spiegel 2021, 8).

Following Balibar's (1988, 2012) writings on citizenship and exclusion, we suggest it is crucial to consider what is to be protected within (and by) the state. Thus, the danger is not the physical body of a citizen or group, but instead the danger posed by protesters who might disrupt or damage the capacities of mining-focussed businesses (Monaghan and Walby 2017). More specifically, if we consider Prime Minister Morrison's speech, the Queensland legislation, and the earlier discussion on citizenship with which this article began, we begin to see the new legislation and crackdowns on protests suggest something of an intrinsic relationship between the state, its governing apparatus, and resource

extraction. While this hegemonic bloc is well known and documented elsewhere (Baer 2016; Nyberg, Spicer, and Wright 2013), the difference, we argue, is the willingness of the state to not only defend the economic interests of the fossil fuel industry, but to proactively formulate laws to shore up the bloc. Similar approaches in Canada are driven by the need to preemptively protect the future of the fossil fuel industry (Dafnos 2020). Dafnos describes this configuration of risk as ‘conjuring up Canada’s extractive future as a site for capital . . . creat(ing) further terrains for accumulation in speculative threats-capes’ (Dafnos 2020, 125). Ultimately, as we demonstrate via Queensland, what is being protected is the dual capacity for extractive industries to profit and for the state to secure its ability to govern through fossil fuels and its infrastructure.

Through the inscription of intent onto protestors by criminalising particular devices of disruption, the discursive demonisation of environmentalists is deployed by the state in order to justify the use of force. Thus, the state is not only engaging in the reassertion of the hegemonic position of fossil fuels in an ideological sense, but employing its powers of coercion in an attempt to prevent dissent.

Conclusion

The account of Karen’s environmental activism with which we began forms part of a larger government publication linking her ‘issue-based violent extremism’ alongside perhaps more stereotypical examples of hate crimes and political terrorism. We do not seek to put forth an argument to suggest Karen’s exceptionality. Instead, we have sought to consider how this framing of environmental protest as a form of violent extremism facilitates the rejection and delegitimisation of environmental protests more broadly. However, instead of focusing on this as a misapplication of the category of violent extremism or seeking to refine its boundaries (see Amster 2006; Vanderheiden 2005), we consider how this demonisation of environmental protest foreshadowed changes to Queensland legislation and made legible the description of protesters as extremists who were operating outside of acceptable pathways for dissent, demonstrating what is at stake for the state in the disruption of fossil fuel extraction.

Returning to the Australian Prime Minister’s provocation at the QRC lunch and considering it alongside the Queensland legislation, we are left with larger questions about the possibilities for social and environmental change. The risk, as Prime Minister Morrison sees it, is that growing public concern over a worsening climate crisis now threatens the future of extractive economies. The question then remains as to how those concerned about climate change, the environment, and land rights are able to respond to what is ultimately an authoritarian step to protect the contingency of an industry and hegemonic bloc which appears to be fundamentally threatened.

Notes

1. Countering Violent Extremism, Australian Government Attorney General’s Department, 2015, 13.
2. ‘Adani land-use agreement: court dismisses Indigenous group’s appeal’ 12 June 2019: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jul/12/adani-land-use-agreement-court-dismisses-indigenous-groups-appeal>

3. 'Adani bankrupts traditional owner in Queensland' 15 August 2019: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/adani-bankrupts-traditional-owner-in-queensland/83c64d37-d872-4d4c-bd5c-781ad3af57e0>
4. <https://frontlineaction.org/about>
5. 'Queensland introduces tough new laws to crackdown on extremist activists' 21 August 2019, <https://7news.com.au/sunrise/on-the-show/queensland-introduces-tough-new-laws-to-crackdown-on-extremist-activists-c-410308>
6. Australian Senate Journal No. 9 30 July 2019, 11, <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22chamber%2Fjournals%2Fcc29c991-3b58-46dc-b6ee-134548a21759%2F0012%22;src1=sm1>
7. Twitter Account, @AnnastaciaMP, 20 August 2019.
8. 'Palaszczuk Government Cracks Down on Dangerous Devices used by Extremists' 20 August 2019: <http://statements.qld.gov.au/Statement/2019/8/20/palaszczuk-government-cracks-down-on-dangerous-devices-used-by-extremists>
9. Summary Offences Bill, first reading 19 September 2019, 3024, <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/tableOffice/BillMaterial/190919/Summary.pdf>
10. Summary Offences Bill, Explanatory Notes, 2019, 3, <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/bill.first.exp/bill-2019-056>
11. 'Queensland introduces tough new laws to crackdown on extremist activities' 21 August 2019: <https://7news.com.au/sunrise/on-the-show/queensland-introduces-tough-new-laws-to-crackdown-on-extremist-activists-c-410308>
12. Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, 2019, <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/tableOffice/TabledPapers/2019/5619T1563.pdf>
13. Ibid, 12
14. Ibid, 9–10.
15. Ibid, 10.
16. Alice Drury of the Human Rights Law Centre testified booby trapping devices is already illegal, citing multiple sections of the Queensland Criminal Code at the Inquiry's Public Hearing (11 October 2019, page 11), <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/committees/LACSC/2019/SummOff2019/trns-ph-11Oct2019.pdf>
17. Question on Notice, No. 1180, Asked on 21 August 2019, <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/TableOffice/questionsAnswers/2019/1180-2019.pdf#search=%22Question%20on%20Notice,%20No.%201180%22>
18. Public Hearing, 11 October 2019, page 55.
19. 'Police Officer Injured at Anti-Adani Protest,' 1 October 2019, The Morning Bulletin: <https://www.themorningbulletin.com.au/news/police-officer-injured-at-anti-adani-protest/3843762/>
20. Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee Inquiry into the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, Departmental briefing by the Queensland Police Service on 11 October 2019, Questions taken on notice: <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/committees/LACSC/2019/SummOff2019/cor-14Oct2019QPS.pdf>
21. Queensland Resources Council Submission, Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, 8 October 2019, page 7.
22. See 'Coal train activist's sanity questioned', SBS News, 20 April 2019: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/coal-train-activist-s-sanity-questioned> and QRC Submission 2019, page 7.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid page 7, emphasis added.
25. Morrison Address, 2019 Queensland Resources Council, Annual Lunch, 1 November 2019, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/address-2019-queensland-resources-council-annual-lunch>
26. Ibid.
27. Submission (47) on behalf of B.M.D. Constructions Pty Ltd, Inquiry into the prudential regulation of investment in Australia's export industries. 2021, page 7.

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