

Australian green group to challenge India-backed coal mine

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The Great Barrier Reef off the coast of the Whitsunday Islands, along the central coast of Queensland

An Australian environmental group Monday launched a new legal challenge to a huge, India-backed coal mine, saying the government's recent re-approval of the project failed to consider the impact on the Great Barrier Reef.

The Aus\$16.5 billion (US\$11.6 billion) project in the Galilee Basin in Queensland state has been criticised by environmentalists who say the coal it produces will not only contribute to global warming but will have to be shipped from a port near the World Heritage-listed reef.

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) said it had lodged papers with the Federal Court applying to challenge Environment Minister Greg Hunt's approval of the Adani company's Carmichael coal mine.

"This action is historic; it's the first case that has sought to test the environment minister's World Heritage obligations as they relate to the climate change impacts on the reef caused by pollution from burning a mine's coal," the foundation's Geoff Cousins said.

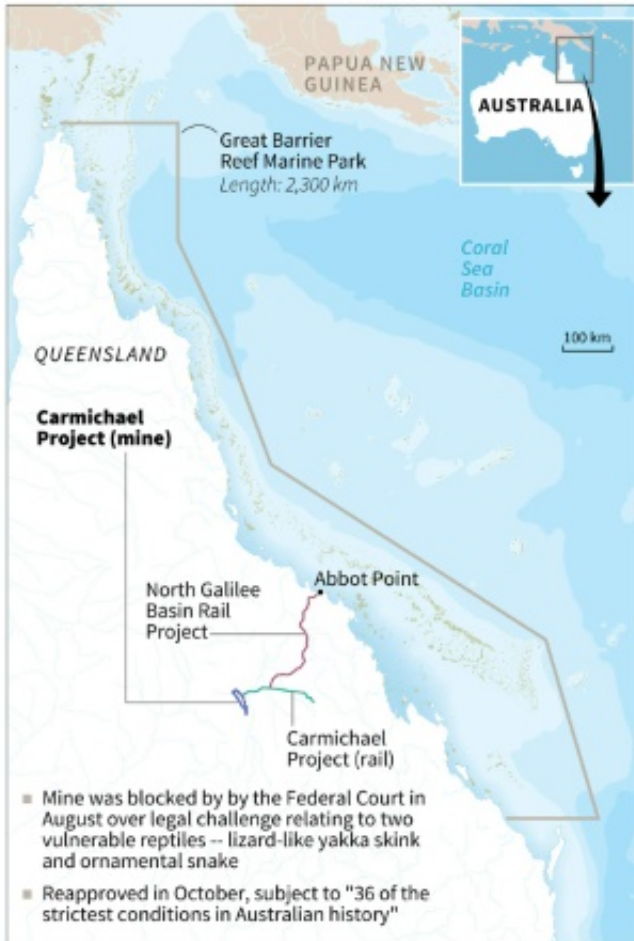
Adani has previously accused environmental activists of exploiting legal loopholes to stall the massive open-cut and underground coal mine forecast to produce 60 million tonnes of thermal coal a year for export, with the approvals process so far stretching to five years.

Environmentalists say the Barrier Reef—the world's biggest coral reef ecosystem—is already struggling from the threat of [climate change](#), as well as farming run-off, development and the coral-eating crown-of-thorns starfish.

"Coral reef scientists are telling us in just a few decades warmer waters could bleach the reef beyond recognition. This would be a tragedy for Australia and the world," Cousins said.

India-backed coal mine

An Australian environmental group has launched a new legal challenge to the Aus\$16.5 billion (US\$11.6 billion) project



Source : Australian government/Greatbarrierreef.org(Adan)/ACF

AFP

Map locating the India-backed coal mine project near Australia's Great Barrier Reef

Scientists warned last month that if the current El Nino weather phenomenon drove worsening warming effects, the [reef](#) would suffer widespread coral bleaching and subsequent mortality—the most common effect of rising sea temperatures.

The Carmichael mine was blocked by the Federal Court in August over a

legal challenge relating to two vulnerable reptiles—the lizard-like yakka skink and the ornamental snake—but was reapproved last month, with Hunt defending its strict environmental conditions.

Lawyers for the ACF said they were now seeking an independent judicial review by the Federal Court of the legality of the government's re-approval.

"Australia has an international legal obligation to do all it can to protect our Great Barrier Reef for future generations," Environmental Defenders Office Queensland principal solicitor Sean Ryan said.

"Our question is, has the environment minister properly applied this legal obligation when considering the impacts of the burning of [coal](#) from this mine on the Great Barrier Reef?"

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