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Premier sends clear signal coal mining not wanted in Margaret River

Western Australia's peak environment group strongly welcomed statements made by the Premier Colin Barnett that the Liberal-National Government would consider special legislation to protect the Margaret river region from coal mining.

Conservation Council Campaign Coordinator, Louise Morris said "The Premier has sent a clear signal today that coal mining is not wanted in the Margaret River region, and is not compatible with the environmental and tourism values of the region."

American Metals and Coal International (ACMI), Perth's Core Coal and Victorian based LD Operations recently revealed plans to develop an underground coal mine just 15km from Margaret River, immediately drawing criticism from the local community. In recent weeks the Margaret River Shire, Winemakers Association, Tourism Association and the Conservation Council of WA have all released statements opposing the project.

Ms. Morris said "Premier Barnett has shown leadership today by agreeing to examine planning legislation similar to existing protection for the Swan Valley put in place by a Liberal government in the 1990's.

"These comments from Premier Barnett send an important message to would-be investors that the Vasse coal proposal is a dead-end, representing an unacceptable investment risk that should be avoided at all costs.

"The Premier should move as quickly as possible to put such protection in place to put an end to the high level of anxiety currently felt in the Margaret River community.

"With Dr. James Hansen, the World's most respected climate scientist calling for coal fired power stations to be closed to protect the climate; the only defensible thing to do with Western Australian coal is to leave it in the ground.

"In addition to the unacceptable carbon pollution this coal mine would produce, the Vasse coal proposal would have a major negative impact on the groundwater that the whole Margaret river region relies upon, not to mention communities from Margaret River to planned coal export facility in Bunbury.