

# The Big Picture

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"News to use & bemuse"

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## Across the news

On Monday night (1/11) WIN carried a brief story revealing that the Victorian and Federal governments were conducting seismic surveys of the Bass Strait which were killing the scallops. Since the areas covered were large, the value of the scallops was estimated at \$65 – 75 m/yr for Tasmania. In addition, local reports from the industry stated that rock lobsters were also affected, with multiple deaths and failures of fishing grounds.

The next day, the item had disappeared from the news (no returns from Google News), presumably 'managed' out by the 3,000 state and federal spin doctors employed by us to protect the government ([HeraldSun](#) & [Punch](#)) at a total cost to taxpayers of over \$250 million per year.

The fishing industry was pressing to get the news out, releasing maps and evidence to the media. Hundreds of publicly funded spin doctors were probably scurrying to bury the story. Within 2 days it had sunk from sight with no further comment. \$100 m dollar fishing grounds destroyed without anyone really noticing. A brief re-emergence on Thursday with Tas Minister Bryan Green stating the seismic surveys didn't do any harm to sea bed life basically because there was no proof. A pretty relaxed attitude towards a major food source.

Then silence, the story vanished to re-emerge on 10 Nov as new seismic testing was announced by Origin Energy.

A spokesman for the Victorian Department of Primary Industries said the industry had been consulted extensively and there was no evidence the testing caused the fish kills.

"The Department of Primary Industries consulted extensively with scallop fishermen ahead of the seismic survey," he said. "In the process, an environmental consultant was engaged to prepare an environmental report on the survey.

"The consultant carried out a review of the existing scientific literature, in which no proven impact from seismic surveys on scallops or similar creatures could be identified."

The department was happy to examine any evidence the fishermen could produce, the spokesman said. [Mercury](#)

Tasmanians already know that Labor prefers to support forestry over food production. That Victorian and Federal Labor mirror the lack of care over food isn't too surprising, in fact Western governments...

...are determined to protect not the marvels of our world but the world-eating system to which they are being sacrificed. They fight viciously and at the highest level for the right to turn rainforests into pulp, or marine ecosystems into fishmeal. Then they send a middle-ranking civil servant to approve a meaningless promise to protect the natural world.

Japan was praised for its slick management of the meeting, but still insists on completing its mission to turn the last bluefin tuna into fancy fast food.

Russia signed a new agreement in September to protect its tigers (the world's largest remaining population), but an unrepealed law in effect renders poachers immune from prosecution, even when they're caught with a gun and a dead tiger. [Age](#)

The fishing ground destruction story has now disappeared among stories of greater moment like the Victorian elections. The best story along those lines might be Ben Pobje's from a re-awakened [New Matilda](#)...

State politics is a strange, sad, almost cute realm, where those ambitious, energetic people gather who are, on the one hand, far too inept and devoid of personal magnetism to succeed in federal politics, and on the other hand, far too inept and devoid of personal magnetism to succeed at anything else either. Oh the dilemma of the state politician: caught so exquisitely between the pincers of their dual incompetencies. But then, that is the life they chose when they decided to make no useful contribution to the world for their entire lives.

If the governments of the so-called G20 were unclear, there are always some wise and experienced Australian politicians ready to advise them...

JULIA GILLARD has urged her fellow world leaders to display "maximum unity" against a rising tide of protectionist sentiment and civil unrest as the developed and developing world recovers from the global financial crisis.

"Sluggish growth, high unemployment, dramatic budget cuts ... is a recipe for rising protectionist sentiment and we can't afford to have it break out." [SMH](#)

Who better to tell the world how to run its affairs?

Meanwhile, the senior bureaucrats continue to advance their ideas to 'socially engineer' Australia into their own image.

The plan is to put Norfolk Islanders on rations to fight both global warming and obesity.

Funded by the Australian Research Council, and approved by the Socialist Left Science Minister Kim Carr, researchers from the Southern Cross University will give each volunteer on the island a "carbon card".

Every time they buy petrol, electricity or an air flight, they will have "carbon units" deducted from the fixed allowance on their card. More units will be lost each time they buy fatty foods, or produce flown in from a long way away.

If, at the end of each year or so, they have carbon units left over, they can sell them. If they've blown their allocation, they must buy more.

But each year, the number of carbon units in this market will be cut, causing their price to soar - and thus the price of extra food, power and petrol to rise - because the idea is to cut greenhouse gases and make Norfolk Islanders trim, taut and terrifically moral.

Conservatives well aware of human fallibility will immediately spot the obvious flaw in this latest scheme of the Left to remake humanity which is: what happens when people run out of their carbon rations, and can't afford the extra units they need to buy more fuel, power or even food? [HeraldSun](#)

Apart from all of the tosh, there seems to be a diminishing number of evidence based stories related to matters of importance in the news.

Also on the government side is a crack team of ministers who over the last 11 years have honed to a fine art their ability to adopt a quizzical expression when things go wrong. [NM](#)

With skills like that at the top we can all relax.

## That Was The Week That Was

### Governance + spin

Qld polities get 2<sup>nd</sup> pay rise this year [CourierMail](#)

Rudd faceless men named [BusinessSpectator](#)

Where Vic Labor gets the money [WeeklyTimesNow](#)

### Food/forestry

Loggers desperate for federal funding [Mercury](#)

Government approves fishing ground destruction [Mercury](#)

### Climate/water/energy/resources/environment

Melbourne water bills set to double again [TheAge](#)

Qld State charges to force water bills to double [CourierMail](#)

Carbon ration card tests for the rest of us [HeraldSun](#)

Global biodiversity protection a con: Monbiot [TheAge](#)

### Health & education revolutions/communication/defence

200,000 + on Vic hospital wait lists [TheAge](#)

Vic hospital targets cost lives [TheAge](#)

No humanism to be taught: ALP [TheAge](#)

### Economy/social/shelter/transport/free speech/World

Incompetence reigns over Melbourne rail: Davidson [TheAge](#)

Centrelink sues pensioners for share of pokie winnings [TheAge](#)

Outsource maintenance could be Qantas problem [CourierMail](#)

Refugee ruling protects us all from injustice: Burnside [TheAge](#)

New housing estates no paradise: Deakin U [HeraldSun](#)

## Governments OK destruction of Bass Strait Fishing industry

The Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery (BSCZSF) is widely regarded as one of the best managed commercial fisheries in Australia.

Prior to 2009 the fishery was closed for a number of years to allow for stock rebuilding, to reduce fishing effort and to develop an approved Harvest Strategy. The fishery reopened for the 2009 season on a very conservative Total Allowable Catch and with boat numbers reduced from a high in the 1980s of 120 boats to only 18 boats.

The fishery now has a Federal government approved management plan and Scallop Harvest Strategy along with rotational harvesting practises which ensure that growing stocks are protected for the future.

All vessels in the fishery are equipped with satellite based vessel monitoring systems and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, researchers and industry work closely together to ensure the sustainability of the fishery and to maximise the economic returns.

Last year AFMA and industry negotiated with two organisations that intended to conduct seismic surveys in Bass Strait.

One company to their credit agreed to relocate seismic transect lines away from the Eastern Protected Scallop Area to ensure scallop stocks were not impacted.

Another organisation based in Victoria arrogantly ignored repeated requests to keep away from the two major protected scallop areas and earlier this year conducted a two month intensive 2D seismic program over a wide area of Bass Strait.

When the scallop harvesting season got underway around mid June this year it was immediately apparent that the very valuable scallop stocks had been impacted and were dying or newly dead at a time when they should be in peak condition.

The Western and Eastern Protected Scallop Areas have been devastated apparently by the seismic activity resulting in at least 70% of dead scallops in both beds and the remaining resource in a very weak condition and most likely to die in the next few months.

Climate change is not believed to be a reason for the mortality as water temperatures have been normal all year and routine testing of scallops has revealed no sign of disease.

The estimated loss of around 24000 tonnes of scallops with a retail value in excess of \$70M will have a significant effect on the regional economies of both Victoria and Tasmania.

It is believed intense and repeated seismic air gun booms may have caused scallops to take flight with repeated startle responses exhausting them to the point of delayed mortality.

A number of age classes are affected so age does not appear to be a factor and other shellfish including oysters, razor clams, dog cockles, mussels and doughboy scallops in the same areas have also died.

The impact of seismic on scallop spat and juvenile scallops is not known but it is expected that it has resulted in total mortality. Significantly in the last week it has been confirmed that known scallop stocks in Bass Strait north east of Flinders Island that were not in the path of seismic activity are in excellent condition just as we would normally expect at this time of the year.

Following a meeting yesterday of concerned scallop fishermen from both Victoria and Tasmania, fishermen have decided on the

following course of action –

- \* To seek legal advice on compensation for the destruction of the fishery and for the loss of 24000 tonnes of scallops valued at around \$70M along with future potential earnings,
- \* To seek to establish a collaborative research project with the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute, Curtin University and other experts to study and measure the effects of seismic on unrestrained wild scallops and other shellfish, and
- \* To communicate with Federal Ministers and the Premiers of Victoria and Tasmania seeking to immediately stop all seismic activity in Bass Strait and coastal Victoria and Tasmania until means of mitigating the impact of seismic activity on scallop stocks and the benthic community have been developed.

Further information can be obtained from BSCZ scallop operators Stuart Richey on 0408 142 337 and Allan Barnett on 0428 561 733.