



📷 Michael Berkman

— News —

Green group responsible for Adani legal challenges granted \$600,000 by State Government

ROANNE BOLDERY, Townsville Bulletin

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THE Labor State Government quietly granted \$600,000 to a green activist legal group behind “countless court actions” against Adani’s coal mine on the day Cyclone Debbie hit North Queensland.

The announcement on March 28 that State Government funding was awarded to the Environmental Defenders Office Queensland (EDOQ) has been slammed by both the Opposition and Adani.

LNP deputy leader Deb Frecklington said the Labor Government funding legal challenges against Adani while publicly supporting the \$21 billion project showed it was “more interested in being in bed with Green activist groups”.

“Taxpayer dollars should not be wasted on litigation that is aimed to stop projects and destroy jobs in Queensland,” Ms Frecklington said. “What’s worse is that this was put out as North Queensland copped it from Cyclone Debbie.”

An Adani Australia spokesman said the company was disappointed as EDOQ had represented the Australian Conservation Foundation and Coast & Country in court cases against the Carmichael development, costing “six-figure sums”.

“The decision to fund this group is a fact for the State Government but it’s a well-known fact that we don’t agree with it – we don’t agree that money used in these court cases should be taxpayer money,” he said.

The EDOQ funding comes after Federal Labor Opposition Leader Bill Shorten said in Townsville this week he was not certain if the Adani project “stacked up” and the Labor Party Mount Coot-tha Branch Facebook page described the mining giant as “disgraceful” in a post last week.

EDOQ chief executive officer Jo Bragg said the Government grants made up only 20 per cent of the group’s funding, which went to “essential services”. Ms Bragg said there were “systems in place” to ensure taxpayer dollars were not used in legal action brought against governments.

“It’s a David and Goliath battle,” she said. “Major mines can do a lot of damage to the environment so it’s absolutely essential that community groups can expose them to ensure we assess the impacts and their lawfulness.”

But Ms Bragg and fellow EDOQ solicitor Michael Berkman are both linked to The Greens. Ms Bragg has run for the party in the seat of South Brisbane and Mr Berkman is the Greens’ candidate for Mount Coot-tha and a vocal critic of the Adani mine.

Deputy Premier Jackie Trad, in Townsville yesterday, confirmed “legal action” was not the purpose of the funds, which she said were given to community legal services statewide.

“We are very pleased to provide funding for the Environmental Defenders Office, as we are other legal services,” she said. “All of these organisations from time to time take different policy positions from the Government and unlike the Liberal National Party, we are not going to gag them and withhold funding because they disagree with the Government.”

Attorney-General Yvette D’Ath’s office confirmed EDOQ would receive \$300,000 for its Brisbane office and \$300,000 for its Cairns office – part of a \$1 million election funding promise.

Natural Resources and Mines Minister Anthony Lynham has argued Labor has done more to advance the Carmichael coal project in just over two years than the LNP did when it was in government, with 35 key approvals and important mining leases.