

Bleeding Australia dry

[Alan Moran](#)



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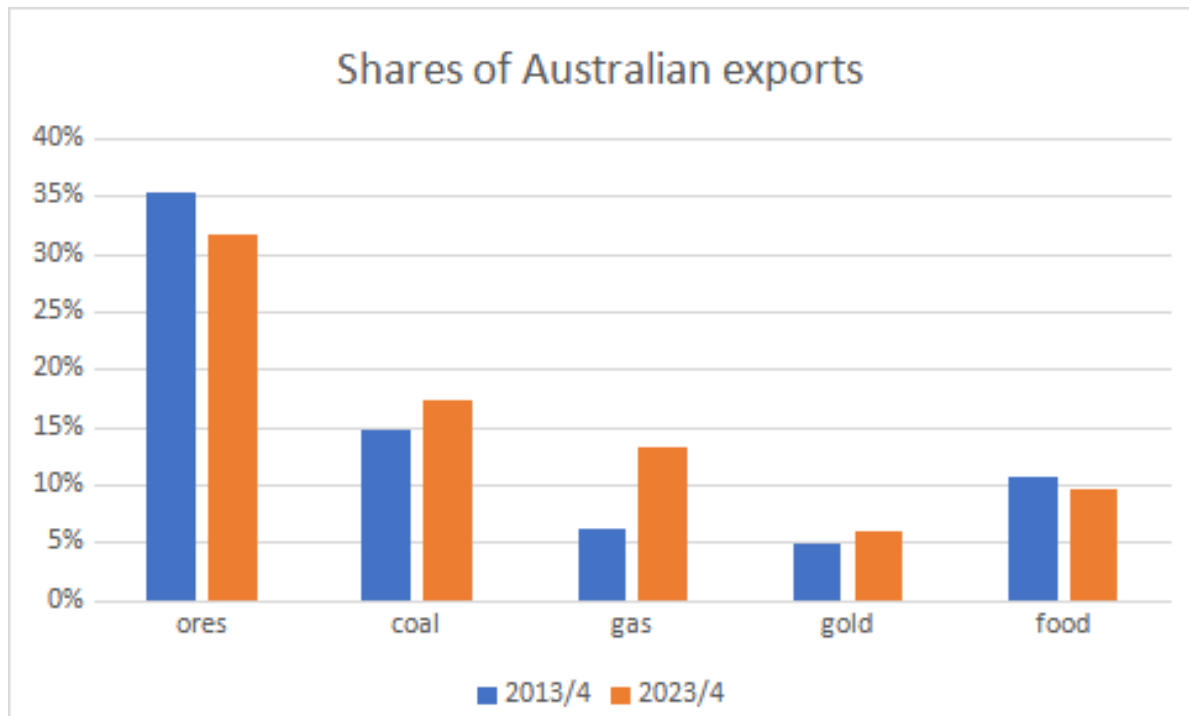
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Nations achieve high standards of living by having a productive workforce and high levels of investment. Either they produce the goods and services most in demand or import them. The latter route requires a corresponding level of exports.

The world's most traded goods are oil, gas, and petrol; motor vehicles and parts; computers and other IT; pharmaceuticals; aircraft; and medical equipment.

Uniquely among 'first world' nations, with the exception of gas, Australia has a major presence in none of these.

Over two-thirds of our exports comprise ores, coal, gas, and gold with food accounting for a further 10 per cent. And the share of these and other primary products has tended to rise.



Without these exports our living standards would be at third-world levels. And yet the miners and farmers responsible for developing and producing these exports are in the sights of the ALP and its associates, the greens and teals.

The latest scalp is that of the Northern Territory uranium mine, Jabiluka.

The mine's re-opening was cancelled by Canberra [according to Tony Grey](#), who was responsible for the mine's discovery and development 40 years ago. His task was less about proving up the deposit, arranging for its reserves to be extracted, and its product transported

and sold but rather was largely about constant negotiations with government agencies to permit the deposit to be worked and on financing a host of regulators to oversight the activity. Hitting mining, especially uranium mining, and claiming, spuriously, that in doing so some valuable rock art is preserved provided too good an opportunity for the Prime Minister to parade his Green-Left credentials.

Very few of the mineral deposits on which our living standards rest were developed with more than the reluctant acquiescence of ALP administrations. New coal mines are almost always opposed and ALP administrations have placed myriad bulwarks to mining activities in general. These include in financing activist groups like the Environmental Defenders Office, ensuring environmental courts are loaded against new activity by the appointment of activist judges, and insisting on onerous environmental and Indigenous protection actions.

Such measures compound the effects of the ALP's protection of militant unions and provision of labour market monopolies in return for political funding. The 'union factor' appears to inflate Australian construction costs by 30 per cent compared to costs for comparable work in Germany and the US. This is a de facto tax that suppresses new mining developments.

Farming, the other industry underpinning the economy, faces its own set of regulatory onslaughts. These include the subsidising of solar facilities that eat into farmland, and squeezing irrigators' water supplies in the Murray Darling, a province that provides 40 per cent of our agricultural output. Other harm is created by governments slugging Queensland farmers and fishermen with regulations, supposedly to protect a Great Barrier Reef that is in no danger, and by

banning the live sheep exports that affluent Middle Eastern markets insist upon.

The ALP in government is reaping the dividends of mining and farming successes that have lifted our income levels. But perhaps because so few have lived outside the union and public service bubble, politicians fail to understand this. They see the mining industry (especially uranium, coal, and gas) as simply extracting value without recognising the skills and effort needed to discover and develop it. And many have a deep-seated contempt for farmers who they equally see as having been given unwarranted privileges to exploit nature.

Few in the ALP or the Greens have any affinity with the rural and regional people to whom they owe their incomes. Most will promote resistance to mining and agricultural developments and thereby fan those flames seeking to progressively close down this heartland of productivity.