

jenni nixon

frontier wars

‘next out of our kitchen taps comes water on fire.’
Nanna Joan’s knitted yellow hat bobs. ‘nowhere is sacred.
fracking fluids cause hazardous water contamination.
vast fluctuations in groundwater levels. in the air
fugitive emissions known to be carcinogenic
have unknown effect on the environment on health.’
she reaches for another ball of buttercup yellow wool.
NO GAS sign flutters at a Gloucester
KNITTING NANNAS AGAINST GAS demo.

Nanna Mavis’s needles click release a stream of honey
her long golden scarf to toss across a bulldozer.
‘in summer the Worimi hunted here fished
winter the tribes went inland. flora fauna thrived.
the land was replenished. balance restored.
then came cedar-cutters with bullocks and blades
logged the trees. cattle grazed on sacred sites
water holes were poisoned wildlife vanished.’

Nan Skye nods as she knits daffodil and black squares
‘settlers gave Aborigines gifts of food laced with arsenic.
fast forward people are sick coal seam gas licences
or applications cover more than half the country
including traditional lands. the banks
mining companies force farmers out. it’s legal theft.
we’re flogging off the family farm overseas.
abandoned homesteads prime agricultural estates
are quarries alien industrial moonscapes.’

'knit sister knit' says Kate 'we're knitting a revolution.
the gas project is shut down for now. CEO resigned.
it's on the radio in the local paper. read all about it:
buy-backs and cancellations of CSG licences.
with cost of production *higher* than the *price* of gas
the Fed govt. *cuts* funds to research energy from natural sources.
NSW govt. *approves* a billion tonnes of *new* coal. yay!
Nanna Mack exclaims 'you sound like headlines in the Advocate.'
signs flap: SHUT THE GATE FRACK FREE ZONE.
'elevated toxic BTEX levels in the wells. how did it get like this?
they should monitor the industry more closely.'

'Mack' soothes Nanna Joan 'we *are* winning
against the gas company wrecking our beautiful valley.'
more signs at the feet of the Nannas: YOU CANT EAT COAL
CANT DRINK GAS THE FUTURE IS RENEWABLE.
Nanna Mavis pipes up 'they're still licensed to explore for more.
we say leave it in the ground for the sake of the kiddies.'
Joan mumbles 'remember when AGL gave out hats and balloons
at the Gloucester show children became walking advertisements.'

Nan Skye sighs 'we all feel the heat of climate change.
heard that the Galilee Basin is a huge carbon bomb.
Barrier Reef under threat with the passage of coal and gas exports.
if the water quality fails the reef dies.' their complaints grow
woven together strand by strand. 'even Dorothea Mackellar's
Kurrumbede was sold for coal mining. *My Country* don't think so.
finished – another woolly jumper for a penguin injured in an oil spill.'