

Making the Switch from **Westpac** and Making it Count

A guide to switching banks to take a stand on financing climate change and new coal mining on the Denniston Plateau



Disclaimer: The information provided in this document does not constitute financial product advice. The information is of a general nature only and does not take into account your individual objectives, financial situation or needs. It should not be used, relied upon, or treated as a substitute for specific professional advice. 350 Aotearoa and Coal Action Network Aotearoa recommend that you obtain your own independent professional advice before making any decision in relation to your particular requirements or circumstances.

Westpac is funding the dirty fossil fuel industry...

It's not a pleasant feeling: learning that your bank – the custodian of your money – is lending money to Bathurst Resources, enabling it to go ahead with plans for new coal mining on the beautiful Denniston Plateau, a project that damages the environment and drives climate change.

The first of these new mines, Escarpment (often referred to simply as the Denniston Plateau mine), is actually just the beginning of Bathurst's plans for the area. They want to open at least five additional mines on the Denniston Plateau and surrounds, that would put 218 million tonnes of CO₂ into the atmosphere.

Luckily there is plenty you can do to help rectify the situation.

This guide takes you through the most important steps in finding and moving to a bank that won't use your money to fund the dirty global fossil fuel industry as long as they continue to pursue new mining and drilling.

More importantly it shows you how, as you switch banks, you can send a powerful message to Westpac that will help it think twice about funding fossil fuels – and perhaps review its claims of sustainability.

This guide should help you switch from Westpac on environmental grounds, and encourage them to think twice about their investment in unsustainably increasing coal mining on the Denniston Plateau, despite the consequences for us and our climate.

While you can use this guide anytime, we especially encourage you to consider closing your accounts as a part of a nationwide "bank switch" event during the week of April 7-12 2014.

To maximise the power of switching banks, it helps to be a bit attention-grabbing. So, we're turning switching banks into a big group event from April 7-12. We're organising group switches at local branches around the country where we can come together to all take the final step in closing our accounts - and create a great event and photo-op. To find out more and sign-up for a switch near you, or to help organise one, check out:

gofossilfree.org/nz/westpac-switch/

Moving from one bank to another is likely to be much more straightforward than you imagine. Many banks will now take care of much of the switching process for you. This leaves you more time to make sure Westpac knows why you are leaving them!

However, you'll want to get started as soon as possible to allow a few weeks to make sure that all your credits and debits are transferred across to your new account before finally closing your old account.

Switching your mortgage

Switching your mortgage is trickier than changing bank accounts, though still possible. Your decision to change your mortgage could involve more variables such as potential financial penalties, including break costs for ending fixed rate mortgages early, and different rates, etc. Whether you find you can change your mortgage or just your other Westpac bank accounts, you will still be sending an important message to Westpac that you don't want them investing in fossil fuels.

1. Choose a new bank

This is a very important step and deciding where to move your money is entirely up to you. 350 Aotearoa and Coal Action Network Aotearoa can't provide financial advice, nor do we single out banks to recommend. But we can let you know which banks invest and loan money to fossil fuel companies.

Bank	Fossil Free?
ANZ	NO
ASB INCLUDING ASB MORTGAGES OFFERED THROUGH SOVEREIGN	NO
BNZ	NO
THE COOPERATIVE BANK	YES ¹
KIWIBANK OTHER THAN CAR LOANS AND PERSONAL LOANS; SEE BELOW	YES ¹
KIWIBANK - CAR LOANS AND PERSONAL LOANS PROVIDED BY GE MONEY VIA KIWIBANK	NO
PROMETHEUS OFFERS SAVINGS AND SELECT LOANS; NO TRANSACTIONAL ACCOUNTS	YES
RABOBANK OFFERS AGRICULTURAL LOANS AND INVESTMENTS ONLY	UNCONFIRMED ²
TSB	NO
WESTPAC	NO
SOUTHLAND BUILDING SOCIETY	UNCONFIRMED ³

1 - Kiwibank and The Cooperative Bank have confirmed that they have no investments in, and are not providing loans to, fossil fuel companies. However, both banks have noted that they do not have a specific policy on fossil fuels, and therefore cannot guarantee they would make no future loans or investments. 350 Aotearoa and Coal Action Network Aotearoa have included them in this table as "fossil free" based on our opinion that, because of their current overall lending and finance policies, which are primarily restricted to individual and small business lending and to re-investing deposits in mortgages/other loans, they are unlikely to take up investments or lending to fossil fuel companies.

2 - Rabobank international group does not finance companies involved in shale gas or oil sands, or provide loans to farmers who lease their lands to shale gas companies. We are working to confirm whether this applies to New Zealand.

3 - SBS status is unconfirmed – you can contact them via www.sbs.net.nz/Contact.aspx to encourage them to state their current position and, if they haven't already, to divest.

4 - For this table, we define "Fossil Free" as having no investments in, or loans/financing to coal, oil or gas extraction companies.

2. Open a new account

Once you've decided on your new bank, it's time to go and open an account. You can do this by visiting a bank branch in person, or some banks now allow you to open a bank account online.

If you are going into a branch, remember to check their requirements for what ID and proof of address you need to bring with you.

3. Identify regular transactions

The next step is identifying the regular deposits (like your paycheck!) and debits (such as your power bill or monthly donation to a cause you follow) that automatically come in and out of your account.

Most banks can help you with this process by obtaining from your old bank a list of all your direct debits and direct credits for the previous 13 months.

REMEMBER!

This process will only switch across recurring direct debit and direct credit payments. Any other automatic payments that you've set up from your account(s) will need to be switched by you, manually. Your new bank will be able to advise you how best to do this.

4. The best part: close your account

Now you are ready to close your Westpac bank account. If you are taking part in a group switch, you'll ideally want to wait to make your final withdrawal and formally close your account during the event. But if you are closing your account on your own another time, these same guidelines apply.

You can generally move the majority of money from your Westpac account as soon as you have set your new accounts up, but you won't close your old account completely just yet. This allows time to make sure you have successfully moved and finalised all incoming and outgoing regular payments, and that all recent transactions through your Westpac account have been processed.

Remember to leave a small amount of money in your old account to cover these final transactions and any final account fees. Any remainder can be withdrawn on the day you close your account, (e.g. the day of the group switch). It's also a good idea to call Westpac beforehand to let them know that you will be closing your account soon and to confirm with them that you haven't missed any steps.

A FEW EXTRA POINTERS:

Keep enough money in your old account to cover any regular payments that might come out before they are transferred to your new account.

Some banks recommend you wait until all direct debits and credits appear on your new bank account before shutting down your old account to ensure they have been correctly re-established.

Alternatively, some banks will send you a letter confirming that they have received notification from the relevant organisations that direct debits and credits have been successfully updated. In this case you will not need to wait until all regular payments appear on your new account before shutting down your Westpac bank account. Speak with your new bank to see which approach they use.

5. Making your bank switch count

Moving your money to a bank that won't fund fossil fuels is an important, positive step. But if you want to help stop the banks from continuing to fund dirty energy projects, moving the money is just part of the process. It is critical that your choice to dump Westpac leaves a lasting impression on them and lets them know that their actions are costing them customers.

● Tell Westpac why you're leaving them

If Westpac doesn't know why you're closing your account and taking your money elsewhere, they can't be expected to know how they need to change. Contact them early on to let them know why you're unhappy about their support of the fossil fuel industry and that you are planning to close your account. Taking the time to write your own personal letter will stand out. Taking the time to write your own personal letter will stand out, or you can download our template from gofossilfree.org/nz/westpac-switch. You can send it to Westpac NZ CEO Peter Clare at peter.clare@westpac.co.nz. When they write back, keep up the dialogue – it only helps to emphasise that you care about the issue.

When you leave Westpac, contact them again to remind them why. The more that customers speak up, the more Westpac will be convinced that it's just not worth lending to fossil fuels anymore.

And of course, if you haven't already, also take a minute to send the letter at westpacdumpcoal.org.nz. It's a quick online form, so all you need to do is fill in your name and email address. By also sending this letter you help build an important nationwide count.

● Tell your new bank why you're joining them

It's important to let your new bank and the public know why you have made the switch. This will encourage your new bank to become more vocal about the environmental impacts of fossil fuels and make it an issue that other banks have to take seriously. Similar to writing to Westpac, email or send a letter to your new bank to tell them why you're joining.

● Close your Westpac account with everyone else!

We would like to get as many people as possible to take part in a switching event from 7-11 April so that we can make a splash with it in the media and get public attention. Register your interest at www.350.org.nz/signup-to-switch. We will email you specific date, time and location details for your local switch, and put details up online at gofossilfree.org/nz/westpac-switch as soon as they are confirmed with local organisers.

● Let your friends and family know why you're dumping Westpac

Losing a customer is one thing, but losing a customer who can influence many more to do the same is even more worrying to the banks. There's a good chance that some of your friends and family are also with Westpac. By sharing your own experience, you might just encourage them to take the same action, magnifying your impact. You also never know what ripples you'll set in motion; a friend who isn't a Westpac customer might mention it to their other friends who are.

Use Facebook, Twitter, email, or have a good old face to face conversation, you know how to spread the word!

● More ways to document and share your experience of moving banks

This is a really important way you can add value to your bank switch. Starting a wider public conversation will put Westpac and others under serious pressure to change their behaviour.

Your experience is an important contribution to that conversation, so take photos, videos, write about it, and share it with the rest of the world.

Here's a few ideas:

- Write a letter to editor about why you are moving banks. Or write a post for a website - yours, ours, someone else's.
- Take photos! If you are part of a group switch, volunteer to help take photos at the event. If you are doing a "solo switch" get someone to help you take a symbolic photo (or video) as you cut up your old eftpos card, or stand outside a Westpac holding a sign with a farewell message.
- Keep a diary – perhaps a video diary – documenting all the stages of opening your new account and closing your old one. Share it as gradual posts online on Facebook or on an online blog. Or share it all at once after you've moved banks.
- Share your photos, videos, blogs, diaries, and anything else with switch@350.org.nz so that 350 and Coal Action Network Aotearoa can share them online too!

REMEMBER:

We're here to help with any non-financial advice you need, and we're here to help share your story of switching banks so that Westpac, and the public, take notice of the need for change. For more information about the bank switch and other ways to ask Westpac to stop financing new coal mining on the Denniston Plateau visit: gofossilfree.org/nz/westpac-switch.

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