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Caroona farmer's blockade a historic victory over coal industry greed

Today marks the end of the 615 day successful blockade of BHP Billiton's coal mining expansion into the Liverpool Plains. Greens MP and mining spokesperson Lee Rhiannon has congratulated the farmers and the community for keeping the blockade alive until the Supreme Court upheld their right to refuse BHP Billiton access to their farms to explore for coal.

"I congratulate the Caroona community for this historic victory of people power overcoming the might of mining giant BHP Billiton," said Ms Rhiannon.

"The win for the Caroona community is a win for all. Our prime agricultural land must be protected. It is too valuable to mine.

"The successful Caroona blockade symbolised the strong will of local farmers to protect their land and water resources from any damage by coal mining.

"The recent NSW Supreme Court decision found that BHP Billiton cannot lawfully enter any farming lands in the Liverpool Plains to explore for coal without prior landholder consent.

"BHP Billiton broke the law by failing to notify landholders and mortgagees of its desire to enter their properties for exploration purposes.

"The Greens were proud to support the farmer's campaign. Greens Senators Bob Brown and Scott Ludlam have visited this region and send their congratulations on this historic day.

"Last year I moved legislation to quarantine agricultural lands and water from damaging mining activity. Unfortunately the bill was defeated by one vote.

"The government still has work to do to ensure that every effort is taken to protect the rich farming lands of the Liverpool Plains.

"I visited the blockade several times to give the Greens' support to the community and have spoken about their extraordinary efforts in the NSW Parliament.

"The Supreme Court decision signals the need for fairer access arrangements between mining companies and landholders.

"The NSW Government also needs to make good its commitment to undertake a detailed scientific assessment of the potential impact of any mining on local water resources, and to make the results available to the public," said Ms Rhiannon.

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