

COAL4BREAKFAST

HAYSTACK ROAD UPDATE

19th April, 2010

Coal company takeovers and the great Coal Seam Methane rush have dominated the news this week.

Haystack Rd C4B was set up to try to save the floodplains from open cut mining, but now landholders have been issued with notices that CSM is being planned on the floodplains.

Initially the companies told us they could directionally drill using corridors 1.6 klm wide, that they would pipe the water off the floodplain, that the pipelines would be placed in consultation with landholders, and would not cause any disruption to the floodplain.

Recent events would suggest none of these are possible or probable which is of great concern to our members. Photos shown at Dalby showed that a pipeline at Roma was still not growing crops after 3 years despite all the promises of best practice rehabilitation. This story is repeated over and over. How could they rehabilitate an open cut coal mine when they cannot even rehabilitate a pipeline?

Peabody Coal is rehabilitating a small demonstration area at Wilkie Creek Mine at Macalister and we look forward very much to its success. It will be a first for Queensland. They plan to grow sorghum there this year.

There has been a great deal of airplay over CSM in the last couple of weeks, and 60 Minutes has been in the area doing a story. Many of our members attended a meeting called by them in Chinchilla, but to the best of my knowledge, none of our members has been interviewed.

Around 250 or more people attended the meeting, and the CSM companies boycotted it. There was also no one there from State Government. The Tara rural residential community provided some theatre, but were generally well spoken and put their case strongly. There was a lot of discussion about the Great Artesian Basin, fracking, salt, etc. The Mayor Ray Brown opened the meeting saying it was time the State Government stepped up to the plate and took the role of honest broker, as no one else knew what was happening. We agree totally.

I have heard the show will go to air this week or next, and should be interesting viewing.

Currently all the CSM groups are speaking and I hope an outcome may be a stronger group and better coordination.

Last Friday, the LNP with leader John Paul Langbroek released their 5 plank policy in Dalby. This was well received by landholders and our group, and promises to protect prime ag land, provide guaranteed revenue return to the regions that supply all the royalties, institute a future food and fibre commission, a rural water advisory panel to get a handle on the CSM and UCG extractions, and a charter of property rights.

Of particular interest, JPL said, "Just as it is unlawful to consider applications to clear vegetation in areas mapped as remnant vegetation, so too should it be unlawful to consider applications for open cut mines on lands identified as top quality agricultural lands."

The LNP should be commended for this policy I believe. It is well thought out, and covers many of the areas of concern to our members. One issue of concern to me is that the CSM horse will have bolted before their water commission could report.

It is very pleasing to see both the Government and the Opposition with competing policies that are designed to protect Strategic Cropping Land. But while we have policies, we still do not have legislation, and the wheels could still fall off. We look forward to positive reports from the SCL advisory committee.

Links to the LNP policy are below, with the press release.

I expect there to be a lot of activity in the next few weeks following the 60 Minutes report. Tonight, Drew Hutton from the Qld Greens was on Steve Austin, ABC Radio and very fired up.

As stated in the last update, Mal Helmuth, Leader of the Government CSG Team stated at Dalby that he had not yet seen a water management policy that would allow any of these CSM projects to proceed! It seems surreal that they are proceeding at breakneck speed, estimate they will suck millions of megalitres of water from the Great Artesian Basin with all the flow on impacts of that for much of inland Australia (22 of the 23 towns in our shire rely on underground water that is at risk), and yet they do not have a plan that will work? And they cannot even rehabilitate a pipeline!

It seems our fight is far from over.

As always, interesting times on Haystack Road.

Jeff Bidstrup, Chair, Haystack Rd Coal4Breakfast Committee

<http://www.lnp.org.au/media-centre/media-release/2403-lnp-will-protect-prime-farm-land.html>

“THE LNP today committed to protecting prime agricultural land for sustainable food and fibre production for generations to come.

In a policy-setting speech* at Dalby LNP Leader John-Paul Langbroek said the LNP’s commitment was more than a political promise – it was a “political duty”.

“The role of governments is to identify lands and waters for national parks based on their pristine environmental value... create industrial reserves based on their suitability for industry... and tracks of land for development purposes.

“Similarly, the LNP believes the most productive agricultural lands should be scientifically identified, be off-limits to mining and reserved exclusively for agricultural production,” Mr Langbroek said.

Mr Langbroek said the LNP would differentiate ‘top quality’ agricultural land from other good quality agricultural land. Such lands should be classed as Category 1 (Strategic Cropping).

“Just as it is unlawful to consider applications to clear vegetation in areas mapped as remnant vegetation, so too should it be unlawful to consider applications for open cut mines on lands identified as top quality agricultural lands.”

Mr Langbroek outlined a five-point policy of protecting prime agricultural lands and the communities that had grown around them.

He said through a Charter of Property Rights, the LNP would legally guarantee the rights of private property owners – whether they be householders in urban areas or primary producers in rural areas. The Charter would ensure government policy relating to land and water rights was based on science and not politics or hearsay. And landholders would be fully compensated for any loss that came from government action.

An independent Commission for Future Foods & Fibre would spearhead development of world-leading agricultural produce, focusing on food security at home and cementing an international reputation for clean green food.

A Rural Water Advisory Panel would focus on all impacts Coal Seam Gas (CSG) and the Underground Coal Gasification (UGC) industries were having on water resources and also opportunities for economic use of ponded water.

And the LNP’s Resourcing the Regions policy would precisely track the flow of mining royalties to ensure all Queenslanders, no matter where they lived, benefitted from the wealth generated from the resource sector.

“Regional Queensland would finally get the share of the State’s wealth that it deserved.

“That’s our commitment to economic transparency... that’s our commitment to ensuring that the wealth created today is invested into industries... invested into communities... to diversify so that we can create the wealth of tomorrow.”