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A great day for Caroona protesters

The NSW Farmers' Association says today's Carroona ceremony to lift the blockade marks a significant day for farmers.

NSW Farmers' Association President Charles Armstrong says today demonstrates what can be done when farmers stand as a united group.

The Carroona Coal Action Group will hold a ceremony to lift the 615 day blockade at Rossmar Park, Carroona. It follows legal advice that the recent NSW Supreme Court decision means that BHP Billiton has no lawful right to enter any farm land in the district without properly formed access agreements.

NSW Farmers' Association President Charles Armstrong says this win shows how effective a dedicated and unified group can be.

"The Association congratulates the Carroona Coal Action Group and is proud to support them through the Australian Farmers' Fighting Fund and the National Farmers' Federation," Mr Armstrong said.

"The Supreme Court decision justifies the action farmers in the Liverpool Plains have taken to prevent BHP accessing their land," he said.

Earlier this month, Justice Schmidt found that both BHP and the NSW Mining Wardens Court (since abolished) did not comply with the Mining Act 1992 when the mining company was granted 'access arrangements' to enter private land and drill for coal against the wishes of the landowners.

"The Carroona Coal Action Group, like the NSW Farmers' Association is not opposed to mining. What we want to see are all interests – mining, landholders and the environment considered equally," he said.

Charles Armstrong says Association Members and the Carroona Coal Action Group are also concerned about the environmental effects of coal exploration in the region.

"This concern relates particularly to drilling due to the underground aquifers present in the area and the erosion of their property rights in the process," Mr Armstrong said.

"The Association has been working hard on issues surrounding property rights such as mining access and will continue to do so, particularly in the lead up to the next Federal Election and 2011 NSW Election.

"The Carroona battle can show us all that to win on these issues we need to remain dedicated, united and strong," Mr Armstrong concluded.

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