

FutureFood Qld Newsletter 2 - 16 March 2009

It is already 2 weeks since our last newsletter, so time for an update. I commented in our last newsletter that LNP had given us a private commitment 'in principle' to protecting prime farm land. It was pleasing to see the very public commitment on the front page of the Toowoomba Chronicle on Saturday, 7th March, from party leader Lawrence Springborg committing his party, should they win government, to the protection of the iconic farming areas of Haystack Road and Felton, and to the introduction of a planning process to identify and protect other areas of prime farm land in Queensland. Mr Springborg said, in releasing the policy commitment, that it was not an anti mining policy, and that LNP recognize the need to protect our prime farm land for future generations. LNP should be congratulated for recognising the importance of this issue.

A few days earlier, the Queensland Greens had announced that they too would protect areas of prime farm land from unnecessary mining development. During the following week, a number of notable independent candidates also stated a commitment to this policy.

With the state election now less than a week away, FutureFood Qld remains hopeful that Queensland Labor will realise the breadth of support for this eminently sensible policy throughout Queensland. We have made sure that the Labor party is well informed of this issue, and, come Election Day, there will be no excuse for Queensland Labor not to have committed to the introduction of this critically important policy.

Our Public Relations campaign has been going according to plan. In the past fortnight we have had television ads running on regional television in both the Surat and Bowen Basins. We have enjoyed good radio coverage in the populated South East. Our public awareness advertisements on urban radio have stirred the interest of urban people which has led to a prime time live interview last weekend, and another one due mid-week this week. We have attracted an enormous level of support and interest through this campaign. As promised, we have very prominent billboards in the Brisbane metropolitan area, the Darling Downs and at Rockhampton (see attachment for photos).

Since our last newsletter, the Haystack Road Coal Committee had a visit from the independent federal member for Liverpool, Tony Windsor. Tony not only has a natural interest in Australia's rural sector, his visit was part of his preparation for the Senate inquiry into national food security. After visiting the Haystack Rd floodplain, Tony said it was overwhelmingly clear to him that the proposition of mining this floodplain was entirely inappropriate, and almost certainly in contravention of the Murray Darling Basin agreement. He went on to say that, should the Queensland Government proceed with such a flawed proposition, there would be a very high likelihood of federal intervention. Pending the outcome of the State election, Haystack Road Coal Committee is anticipating visits from at least two highly influential federal senators.

We note with interest, that the Minerals Council of Australia, said in its submission to the federal senate hearing into the environmental protection and biodiversity (EPBC) act in November last year, that it felt an appropriate role for the Commonwealth Government was to undertake bio-regional planning, pre-emptive of development pressure. We have correspondence from the Queensland Resources Council, confirming that they support this initiative from their national body. They further confirm that they have, in correspondence to the State Government, requested regional development planning for the Surat Basin.

It is increasingly obvious that every responsible commentator and every informed stakeholder can see that mining areas like Haystack Road is wrong and that good development outcomes don't just happen by accident.

FutureFood Qld is committed to achieving its goals. We will work with the elected government of Queensland, whoever that may be, and we will continue to lobby and raise awareness with all the means at our disposal. We continue to attract strong moral and financial support, and this will be needed to keep the effort post election day. Our task, and our determination, will not end on Election Day – it will end when the result is achieved!

Regards,

Geoff Hewitt
Co-Chairman
FutureFood Qld