

MEDIA RELEASE

19 September 2012



LANDHOLDERS NEED URGENT CLARITY ON COMPENSATION RIGHTS

The Basin Sustainability Alliance (BSA) is seeking urgent assurance from the government and coal seam gas companies that people on the land dealing with impacts of, and suffering damages from, coal seam gas (CSG) exploration and development will be entitled to compensation.

Chairman David Hamilton said BSA had raised concerns that recent changes to Queensland legislation could seriously impact on many farmers who operate using family trusts, partnerships and family companies.

The Streamlining Mining Amendment Bill, passed by parliament at the end of August, saw a change to the definition of "occupier" in the Petroleum and Gas (Production & Safety) Act 1994 causing concern from landholders and landholder legal representatives.

"Unless they have a registered lease in place, our understanding is that family businesses and sharefarmers may not be entitled to negotiate any agreement for compensation with a CSG company even though it would be their business, their lifestyle, and their day-to-day operations that would be impacted."

"We are calling on the Queensland Gasfields Commission to seek crown law opinion to ensure landholder rights are not diminished through this change to the law.

Mr Hamilton said since raising the issue with several State politicians earlier this month, BSA had not received any formal responses, and information provided to the media by the Minister Andrew Cripps had not alleviated BSA's concerns.

He said the group was also disappointed by the recent public comments from Flinders Land Access Advisory Board on this matter which BSA felt trivialised the genuine concerns of farmers and those living in 'gasfield target zones'.

"This is very unhelpful -- it's time to start building trust and good business relationships -- not just dismissing legitimate concerns that landholders might have," he said.

"Given the range of opinion and confusion on this issue, we urge the Gasfields Commission to obtain clarity from the Crown on the meaning of the word "occupier" for the purposes of defining who would be a legitimate claimant for compensation under the Acts."

He said the idea to streamline legislation for all forms of mining and gas activities was just another example of how the impacts of mining and CSG industries are so poorly misunderstood.

"We are very concerned that the Government has not recognised there are significant differences between the different forms of mining which are undertaken by very different companies. The landholder or occupier is expected to continue to live and work in the gasfield, while coal and mineral mines usually purchase the land and this removes the current user of the land from the equation.

"The way this bill was pushed through without any consultation with agricultural and landholder groups is again just another example of the imbalance of power in play in the mining vs. agriculture debate."

Mr Hamilton noted that he had not seen any gas company publicly weigh into the debate regarding the change to this legislation.

ENDS

For an interview or more information contact David Hamilton 0429 466 351.

www.notatanycost.com.au