



Desert Uplands Committee Media Release

25th August 2008

Landholders Confront Exploration and Mining Issues at Jericho Information Day

Last Thursday, the Desert Uplands Committee held an information day in Jericho on the contentious regional issue of coal exploration and mining that's commenced on an unprecedented scale. Currently, many local landholders are being adversely affected by explorative work on their properties. Their rights and strategies when dealing with these works and its contractors, and subsequent developments were outlined and discussed. Important also on the day was the attendees collectively discussing, gathering and sharing of information on the current and future Galilee Basin coal mine development.

The Galilee Basin covers an estimated area of 247,00sq km in Central Queensland, west of the Great Dividing Range. Current press releases claim it's the largest undeveloped coal deposit in Australia, with in excess of 4 billion tonnes of thermal coal. Waratah Coal is proposing a coal mine in the Galilee Basin linked by a new 495km rail line to a purpose-built export facility on the Central Queensland coast at Shoalwater Bay. This Canadian company also currently has 5 exploration licenses covering 2,155sq km, with a further 2,732sq km currently under application. Other exploration companies operating in the Galilee Basin include Swanbank Resources Pty Ltd and Alpha Coal Pty Ltd.

The Jericho Coal Information Day was very successful with more than 75 landholders attending from Alpha, Jericho, Clermont, Blackall, Aramac and as far west as Longreach. Topics covered included

- Explanation of landholder rights and suggested strategies with mining and exploration companies and their contractors,
- Dealing with a mining project on your property - recommended action, and
- Dealing with gas exploration, rail line construction, water pipelines and other subsequent developments- recommended action.

Presentations by George Houen of Landholder Services Pty Ltd, Toowoomba included sharing his 18 years of experience in dealing with mining companies and enlightening question and answer sessions. Mr Houen said after the information day "It is very challenging for individual landholders who have no previous experience with mining to handle it in a way that protects their assets and livelihood."

One of the main concerns expressed on the day was the behaviour of the contractors and contract drillers. "It is apparent a lot of exploration work is being badly managed," Mr Houen said. "It's not good enough and my advice to this group is don't put up with it and use your statutory rights to complain to the proper authorities". Mr Houen also provided a wide range of literature to landholders all of which is available from the Desert Uplands

Committee Office and shall be on hand at the upcoming Westech Field Days in Barcaldine on 9th and 10th of September.

Committed to providing services that enable landholders to make better decisions and improve their enterprises, the Desert Uplands Committee responded to increasing anxiety and confusion being generated by the poorly organised and executed coal exploration works happening between Jericho and Alpha, by holding this field day. As the chair, Robyn Adams said “The coal companies seemingly prefer the ‘divide and conquer’ method, with threats of court action if individual landholders don’t sign agreements. Many landholders here have had gates left open, cattle left with no water after drilling work, and being ignored when they have then requested basic agreed protocols be followed.”

“As the Galilee Basin continues to develop, a growing number of landholders from the Desert Uplands region will be affected, it’s imperative that landholders receive the most up-to-date, independent information so that they can achieve the best possible outcomes for themselves, their families and their businesses. It needs to be remembered that these properties are not just agriculturally productive, but also for the land holders, it’s their entire livelihood, their total assets and their superfund, and often a generational inheritance.”

Robyn Adams went on to explain that the lack of understanding and respect shown by these companies has been disappointingly further exasperated by repeated requests for engagement to resolve these issues, being told to ring the 1800 number or email the inquiries line. The landholders now being effected and soon to be affected would like true two-way communication with the executives of these mining companies, and the chance for their views and concerns to be collectively and meaningfully discussed, with solutions being born from this rather than imposed from the city head offices of firms sub-contracted to provide the ‘community consultation services’.

Those attending the mining field day also raised many questions. Do we really need more coal mines anyway? If so, then why do so in the Desert Uplands Bioregion, Australia’s nationally declared Number One Biodiversity Hotspot? Why is this rich ecological inheritance now in good custodial hands of sustainable graziers going to be abused for one-off short term royalties? Does not this all contradict the Australian Government’s *Caring for our Country* and *Farming Future* Climate Change initiatives and carbon pollution reduction scheme now being heavily promoted?

Hence, the Desert Uplands Committee will continue to support landholders to gather and collectively discuss these issues, empowering them to achieve positive outcomes and improved sustainability of their properties, enterprises and communities through the massive changes that coal mining imposes upon them. Further information can be obtained by contacting the Desert Uplands Committee Office on Tel: 07 4651 1002 or visit the DUC Tent at the upcoming Westech Field Days in Barcaldine in September where mapping services of current and planned exploration and mining licences can be assessed. END