

# ***Coal OR Crops?***

## ***“No, Coal AND Crops”.***

*A Submission on*

*“Protecting Queensland’s strategic cropping land: A policy framework.”*

*Submitted by*

*The Carbon Sense Coalition*

[www.carbon-sense.com](http://www.carbon-sense.com)

*September 2010*

A print friendly pdf of this report can be found at:

<http://carbon-sense.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/coal-or-crops.pdf>

Submissions to be sent to: [sclenquiries@derm.qld.gov.au](mailto:sclenquiries@derm.qld.gov.au)

### ***Introduction and Scope***

The Queensland Government is proposing to create a new category of restricted land use called “Strategic Cropping Land”, which is reserved for “cropping” and closed to almost every other type of land development. This would create No-Go zones covering as much as 4% of Queensland, representing an area more than twice the size of Holland and including many areas likely to contain the mineral and energy resources for tomorrow.

This proposal will affect every landowner and every rural industry in some way, almost all negatively, but its most immediate effect will be on landowners and coal explorers. This submission will focus mainly on these two effects. It will not attempt to investigate the accuracy or logic of the computer generated maps that would provide this new strait-jacket for Queensland, nor will it look at all the other industries or developments which may be banned or red-taped to death on this proposed inferior class of land title.

A description of the proposed policy can be found at:

<http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/land/planning/strategic-cropping/index.html>

## ***What is “Cropping Land”?***

Despite what government planning maps may suggest, there is no clear line dividing cropping land from all other land.

Land use changes all the time. Land which just decades ago was brigalow scrub now grows sorghum. Land which grew lucerne and potatoes in pioneering days is now grazing land or housing blocks. Land which recently was grazing land is now covered with regimented ranks of carbon credit forests. Land which once produced cereals for food is now devoted to producing biofuels for cars. Other grazing land is degenerating into unproductive scrubs of woody weeds because of mandatory vegetation clearing bans.

Four things are needed to create good cropping land:

- Good soil, which is a combination of mineral nutrients, soil microbes, soil carbon and clay/silt/sand ratio.
- Topography – preferably reasonably flat.
- Climate - reliable rainfall (or irrigation water) and moderate temperatures.
- Weed control.

Soil needs a wide range of mineral nutrients before it can support a good growth of healthy plants. Soil is created from the decomposition of rocks under the influence of rain, sun, oxidation, erosion and absorption of carbon and other nutrients from the atmosphere via plants and rain. But if the source rocks are deficient in key minerals, the natural soil will also be deficient.

Source rocks that tend to create good cropping soils often include basic volcanic rocks like basalt, dolerite, volcanic ash, or calcium/magnesium rich rocks like limestone and dolomite. Much of the Great Dividing Range provides these rock types. When these rocks are sufficiently eroded by frost, sun and rain and deposited by flooding rivers on black soil alluvial flats they create superb cropping land. This process continues with every flood.

Other good soils are created by in situ decomposition of soft nutrient-rich rocks. Ironically, coal measures decompose when they are exposed on the surface to create nutrient-rich dark soils full of soil carbon and trace elements derived from the plant material of the decomposing coal seams. Much of the good soils in the brigalow belt in the Bowen Basin are developed from and on top of eroded coal seams.

The location of rivers and their rich alluvial flats is determined by the structure of the underlying rocks and by the location of faults. Rivers and creeks tend to seek out the softer more easily eroded rocks, and also tend to flow along the structures and follow faults.

Coal also follows structures in the rock strata and many other mineral deposits are located within or near faults.

Thus the same geology that determines where good cropping land is located often also determines where good coal and other mineral deposits are located. The good soil overlies the coal seam. They are often near one another.

Thus any policy that bans mining beneath good soils will tend to sterilise large quantities of open cut coal buried beneath the “cropping land”.

There are usually barren sandstones at variable distances above and below coal seams. These tend to form poor quality sandy hills and scarps, not suitable for cropping and generally not attractive places to find open cut coal.

So this policy boils down to:

***“You are NOT allowed to look where the best coal is likely to be. But you MAY look in areas where there is a low chance of shallow coal seams.”***

There is also no justification for blanket bans on underground mining within the boundaries of “Strategic Cropping Land”. Admittedly longwall mining can result in uneven subsidence at the surface, causing inconvenience for surface cultivation. This is a matter for compensation and restoration, not blanket bans.

### ***Is Cropping Land “Limited”, or can it be Created?***

Four things are needed for good cropping land – nutrient rich soil, level topography, plant friendly climate and control of unwanted competitive plants (weeds).

If we are lucky, all four things are created and supplied by nature in the one spot. But, if necessary, all four requisites for growing food plants can be created from unsuitable materials by man.

Good soils can be created by application of key nutrients as fertilisers; or by physical means such as contour ripping to open soils, retain rainfall runoff and allow moisture and nutrients to penetrate; or by heavy periodic animal impact.

A smart Australian mining engineer, P A Yeomans, provided a great example of creation of rich productive soil from very poor natural material. He developed the system known as Keyline Development which, in one process, retained more natural rainfall on the land and created deeper and richer soil. If this system is combined with planting of good pastures and legumes, addition of any missing mineral nutrients and then subjected to periodic heavy impact and fertilisation from grazing animals, very rich productive soils can be created quickly.

Ref: Yeomans, P A, 1968, ***“Water for Every Farm”*** Murray, Sydney, Australia.

Other smart farmers have created good soils merely by identification of key missing nutrients. One famous farmer with very poor land in Western Australia, Art Linkletter, noticed that grass grew better under the telephone lines – his clue to a copper deficiency which, when corrected, created better soil where there had been none before.

Holland is a great example of creation of cropping land by reclaiming it from the sea - 26% of Holland is below sea level, protected by artificial dykes. The nutrient rich soils which accumulated under the North Sea have allowed the Dutch to create one of the most productive areas of cropping land in the world. About nine million people live on this reclaimed land. Think what the Dutch could do with the Gulf of Carpentaria?

The Israelis have shown the world how to create cropping land in the desert, using better irrigation techniques, suitable plants and appropriate farming practices. Australia has many deserts waiting to bloom.



**Making the Desert Bloom. Israel.**

Source: <http://picasaweb.google.com/joanlurie/SarElPhotos#>

Good cropping land needs flat topography to prevent water erosion and to encourage good penetration and retention of water. Some crops like rice need dead flat land capable of being ponded.

The terrace farmers of China, Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines and Peru show us how good cropping land can be created in steep topography.



**Terrace Farming in China – Cropland Creation.**

These terraces were constructed largely with hand tools and draft animals, taking centuries. Imagine how quickly laser-levelled crop land could be produced in the flat land of Australia with the kind of heavy earth moving and survey equipment we have today. Fertility can also be created by application of whatever is missing or useful:

- Soil carbon from oxidised coal or from compost factories fed on organic waste;
- Lime, gypsum, dolomite, basalt dust, clays or sea salt as needed;
- Grass and legumes appropriate for that area;
- Managed heavy animal impact.

Such a program could create fertile carbon-rich crop land from very poor soils in a short time.

Naturally it would not be practical to create all of our cropping land in this way. However we could easily replace the food production capacity of the small area of cropland destroyed by open cut coal mines.

Moreover, in a piece of nice serendipity, the burning of coal produces that valuable plant food carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide is heavier than air and during still times, would tend to fertilise the crops or trees in the vicinity of the power station. This tendency for better plant growth near and down-wind of power generators has already been noted. Land surrounding a coal or gas fired power station will thus become more productive for either farming or forestry.

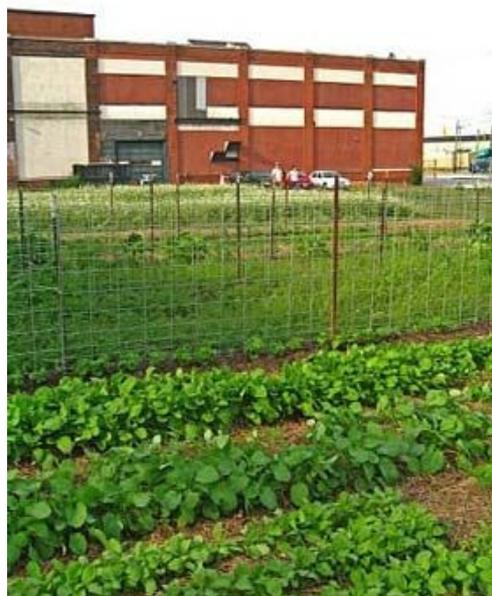
Sometimes all that is required to grow food is the creation of an environment (local climate) that is friendly to plant growth. This usually involves controls on the temperature, humidity or carbon dioxide content of the air in which the plants grow. Some very productive cropping “land” is created in hot houses, fodder factories, green houses, glass houses and plant nurseries. These can be built close to cities thus minimising transport costs and wastage.

Lots more “cropping land” is created by supplying all plant nutrients in exactly the right proportions in hydroponic installations. There are now very large hydroponic farms supplying large quantities of vegetables to city markets.

There is another huge avenue for increasing food production – prevention of food waste. It is estimated that 50% of the world’s food is wasted, much of it caused by poor infrastructure which prevents food from getting to consumers before it rots.

Anyone who remembers the roads, power supplies, hospitals and telephone services in the Bowen Basin before coal mining started at Goonyella will appreciate the huge improvements in infrastructure that the mines have financed and encouraged. This infrastructure now helps get food to markets quickly, and has allowed good cropping land to remain sustainable during adverse market conditions.

Generations ago, every suburban block had a few chooks, a big vegie garden and a few fruit trees. If we were ever short of food, the digging forks and rotary hoes would come out again, water-hungry lawns would disappear and urban farming would create its own crop land.



**Urban Crop Land.**

Source: <http://www.easywaystogogreen.com/green-guides/urban-gardening/>

So, “cropping land” is not limited – it may become limited by our lack of imagination or by the resources we are prepared to devote to its creation, or by political “plans”.

Cropping land can also be destroyed by bad farming practices, by invasive weeds or by political bans on vegetation control, particularly the protection of woody weeds of the eucalypt family.

### ***Are Coal Resources “Limited”, or can they be Created?***

Coal is where you find it, and the coal resources of Queensland, although enormous, are definitely limited. Fertile cropping land can be created from almost any landscape if enough effort is applied. But no matter how much effort or ingenuity is applied, new coal resources cannot be created from barren rock (or anything else). Coal deposits that are economic to extract under current cost and tax regimes are even more limited, but new coal resources will still be found hidden below land designated as “Strategic Cropping Land”.

Should this destructive policy be adopted, no one will ever know which wheat paddock hides a black gold bonanza which could have created a windfall in compensation for the landowner, jobs for locals, profits for shareholders, income for super funds, finance for roads rail lines and ports and a steady stream of rates, royalties and taxes for all levels of government.

### ***Is there a Food Production crisis in Queensland?***

Queensland produces a massive surplus of food of all types – wheat, beef, mutton, pork, chicken, oats, maize, rye, barley, sugar, rice, dairy products, nuts, fruits and vegetables. No one outside of Parliament could suggest we are facing a food crisis. Thus “food security” cannot be used to justify this policy.

If politicians were really concerned about our ability to produce food, they would NOT:

- Mandate the use of biofuels in motor fuel.
- Subsidise the production of ethanol.
- Subsidise the creation and protection of carbon credit forest projects.
- Prevent farmers and graziers from protecting their pastures and farms from invasion by woody weeds.
- Lock up yet more land as National Parks, Wild Rivers and Conservation zones etc (usually just prior to elections.)

- Destroy cropland by digging pipelines through them. (Coal deposits cannot be shifted – pipelines can.) See: <http://www.sunshinecoastdaily.com.au/story/2010/09/23/jail-me-but-ill-fight-on-says-farmer-farmer-digs-i/>
- Allow cities to waste water with subsidised water prices while forcing food irrigators to the wall with excessive water prices and the creation of artificial water shortages.
- Prevent farmers from selling raw food products direct from the farm to willing and informed buyers.
- Prevent farmers from protecting their crops and orchards from attacks from birds, roos and bats.
- Ban the sale of disfigured or marked but perfectly nutritious fruit and vegetables.
- Encourage urban sprawl by hindering inner city developments, high rise and high density living. Undercharging for roads and public transport also hides the real cost of living on acreage in the outer suburbs.

All of these actions and policies are anti-food. *(If someone wanted to deliberately cause a food crisis, this list would be a good start point.)* Therefore to use “food security” as an excuse to justify banning coal mining on a tiny proportion of our cropping land is just insincere political puffery.

### ***Defence Considerations - Is Cropping Land “Strategic?”***

“Strategic” generally means: “critically important for defence or national survival”.

Queensland has more food, coal and land per head of population than probably any other country on earth. We are a huge exporter of food and coal and we probably have more idle land, parkland, reserved land and open space per head of population than any other country. A shortage of land space is thus not likely to be strategically important to Queensland.

Queensland is also unlikely to ever face a food famine unless it is artificially created by politicians – Queensland has always produced a large surplus of food. Therefore to describe cropping land as “strategic” is just usual bureaucratic hyperbole.

There is however, an important “strategic” aspect to this new policy proposal.

The world already knows what areas are likely to be affected by these proposed bans on exploration – the maps have already been placed on the web by the government.

The world also knows where Queensland's new coal deposits are likely to be. Unlike deposits of metals oil and gas, coal occurs in seams of reasonable continuity and predictability. We now have extensive information on the location, thickness, dip and strike of the best seams in our coal basins. Much of this information is also on the web and available to anyone in the world.

Therefore it is not beyond the capability of coal deficient foreign interests to calculate how much coal may now be hidden under a few paddocks of wheat, locked away and forgotten by a few million mis-led and mis-informed Australians.

Australia has much of the world's land, mineral, timber and fishing resources. In many areas these well known resources have been deliberately sterilised by declarations of national parks, marine parks, heritage areas, conservation areas, aboriginal homelands, Wild Rivers Bans, logging bans, vegetation clearing bans, and urban development.

Energy hungry foreigners know about what one overseas observer many years ago described as "A Persian Gulf of uranium riches lying idle in the Northern Territory". Much of it is still lying idle or waiting to be discovered. Queensland also has huge oil resources locked up and sterilised in oil shale deposits. Australia has an enormous area of sterilised continental shelf known to contain oil and gas and likely to contain bonanza deposits of tomorrow's carbon fuel - methane hydrate.

At the same time it has become almost impossible to build any new water supply dams to harvest some of the huge runoff that occurs in flood cycles. The Nathan Dam site on the Dawson River, for example, has been known, surveyed and talked about for fifty years, as has the wet-season water potential of the Gulf rivers.

The proposed "Strategic Cropping" bans on exploration and development are likely to sterilise a huge percentage of Queensland's future coal resources. We are thus proposing to add enormous quantities of coal to all of the other minerals, timber, water and fish resources sterilised under development bans.

These idle resources will attract increasing secret attention from the strategic thinkers of the world. They will become a magnet for the teeming millions of resource hungry people who now have the knowledge, the technology and the military strength to covet them. The bans themselves would be a strategic liability for Australia. We need to learn from history.

### ***Learning from History***

"If goods can't cross boundaries, armies will."

***Frederick Bastiat***

For another comment on how resource sterilisation is endangering national security see:  
<http://carbon-sense.com/2010/08/17/resources-and-security/>

## ***Opportunities Lost (or “How to Depopulate the Bush”).***

Gold provided the lure to explore early Australia. Shortly after Queensland was founded in 1859, gold was discovered in several locations from the Cape and Palmer Rivers in the north to Charters Towers and Gympie in the south. Prospectors and miners flocked to the gold fields. The great Mount Isa deposits of silver, lead, zinc and copper have supported a large community for almost a century and financed the construction of extensive town, road, rail, port and processing facilities in the North from Mount Isa to Townsville. Mining created Cloncurry, tin helped create Herberton and Stanthorpe, bauxite created Weipa and boosted Gladstone and Brisbane, gold created Cracow, opals opened Lightning Ridge and sapphires are all the talk at Anakie. The fabulous Mt Morgan mine created the town, and financed the Persian Gulf oil discoveries. Oil and gas has long been an economic stimulus for the country beyond Roma.

In more recent years, the widespread coal developments have transformed community infrastructure in central Queensland.



**Typical Road in Central Queensland 1961.**

**This picture was taken by Chris Gregory in 1961 BC (Before Coal).**

In the words of that great Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey, mining is still “The Rush that Never Ended”.

But politicians can kill the exploration goose that lays these golden eggs. If land is locked up and current mines exhaust their resources, towns will shrink and services will disappear from the outback. No one knows for sure what lies below all that “Strategic Cropping Land” until it is drilled. This destructive policy will close options for generations of Queenslanders who will never know what politicians have deliberately hidden from them.

## ***Who Supports this policy? What is the Hidden agenda?***

Only two classes of people will benefit from this proposal.

The first are those genuine landowners who love their land and life style and do not want to ever see development or change.

Some land may have been in the same family for generations. In a just world with decent property rights, such landowners should have the right to say “No” to developers, without explanation. This nostalgia motivates a minority of landowners.

However such a world has been lost as property rights were taken by politicians and given away to others. Explorers and farmers now have legitimate rights to different aspects of the same property.

Farmers who support the placing of development bans on part of their property are supporting the confiscation of explorer rights, and are also closing some development options for their own families. Conditions and families change. Some future generation on that property will sorely regret the removal of the development option from the family business.

No landowner who cares about the value of his property should support this proposal. Immediately his land becomes off limits for exploration or development, the chance of an attractive purchase offer from a rich mining company or developer has gone. So also has every other potential development the landowner himself may consider. His descendants will regret this sterilisation of their birthright.

The Greens have been very active in fanning rural discontent and magnifying every real or imagined “threat” from every resource development proposal. Should we believe that the Greens have suddenly become supporters of farming? Not at all. In other forums and policy discussions Greens oppose every aspect of modern farming and are behind all attempts to convert farmland back to bush. Greens and some other politicians and lobby groups see this as just another issue that may help them to win elections, or to attract new supporters or donations. They seek the closure of every coal mine and power station. Exploiting farmer discontent is a convenient weapon to achieve their anti-coal aims.

Farmers should be very wary of any land rights policy promoted by the Greens. Their aim is to destroy freehold land rights bit by bit, deter all developments except green energy symbols and close every coal mine. Once they destroy the coal industry, their next target is cattle and sheep. Farmers should heed this advice:

***“Don’t call a wolf to protect you from the dogs.”***

This proposal is just another step towards government control of all land use and land use changes. The steps and goals are fully outlined in the "Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements", drafted by the UN in 1976. This declaration notes, among other things:

*"Change in the use of land, especially from agricultural to urban, should be subject to public control and regulation. Such control may be exercised through zoning and land-use planning as a basic instrument of land policy in general and of control of land-use changes in particular."*

So if this proposal succeeds, farmers can expect to need government approval to change land use from cropping to orchards, say. On other land they may need a permit to plough grassland or remove a sucker from grazing country. Special dispensation will be required to introduce cattle or sheep.

### ***The Clash of Property Rights.***

Once upon a time, freehold land rights were respected. The English tradition of "A man's home is his castle" resulted in strong freehold property rights in the whole British Empire, including the great mining fields of Australia, USA and South Africa. Freehold land rights included freehold mineral rights, even in Australia. There were no overlapping tenures. If you wanted to mine under that land, you came to an agreement with the owner (which may have included royalty payments to the owner) or you bought the land, or you went elsewhere.

For example, the original Gold Fields company was founded in South Africa when a smart geophysicist identified the farms that overlay the gold bearing carbon leader deep below. With almost the last of their cash resources, Gold Fields bought the critical line of farms, and established the golden base for that great mining house. (For the full story, read "The Road was Paved with Gold".)

This system of secure freehold property rights worked well. Mining boomed and landowners welcomed the possibility of earning royalties from mining.

However, for over a century, under the influence of the same collectivist philosophies that created the comrade societies, governments have whittled away at freehold property rights, mainly by use of the Fabian strategy of "bit by bit". The biggest recent blow was delivered by Neville Wran in 1982 when he confiscated most of the last freehold coal rights.

Now "freehold land" is a title so weak as to be almost indistinguishable from leasehold. Mineral rights, oil and gas rights, coal rights, water rights, vegetation rights, timber rights and carbon geo-sequestration rights have gone and now it is proposed that development rights also be removed from the land rights for some landowners.

No wonder our landowners feel dispossessed as more and more rights are removed from them without compensation or consultation. Miners and explorers are getting the same feeling. Queensland is becoming like the worst banana republic, a place where property titles exist only at the whim of politicians.

### ***The Retrospective Seizure of Rights from both Landowners and Resource Owners.***

Both “landowners” and explorers have similar assets – a bit of paper written by an official and signed by a politician granting them different rights over the same bit of land. Often two or more explorers may have different rights covering the same bit of land. This silly policy of allowing and encouraging overlapping tenures is the root of most problems between landowners and the various resource owners.

The proposed policy for cropland development bans will remove valuable rights from both landowners and those who have spent money on exploration. To propose the introduction of retrospective seizure of rights off both landowners and explorers is an unprincipled backward step. If it occurs, both parties should have the right to receive compensation for this confiscation.

### ***Asset Values and Compensation.***

If this foolish policy becomes law, it will immediately destroy value in the balance sheets of any exploration companies who hold exploration rights over “Strategic Cropping Land”. There will be a large number of such circumstances. Soon after it becomes law, every affected company will be told by its auditor to write off all asset values associated with those parts of the tenements.

Will shareholders embark on class actions to obtain restitution? Will directors of exploration companies move to seek compensation? Will bankers be understanding as they see asset values disappear from balance sheets? And when the chance of a high priced sale to a coal developer disappears, will some banks foreclose on stressed landowners?

### ***Exemptions and Gaming.***

As usual, governments do not want their own activities to be hampered by the same bans they apply to mere subjects. So if any arm of government wants precious strategic cropping land for any development which they support, the crops will be swept away and the development will proceed.

By this action alone, governments have admitted that strategic cropping land will not be preserved at all costs or for all time. Therefore the whole thing which sounds so definite and pristine boils down to the fact that all decisions on development proposals on this type of alienated land will be made by bureaucrats and all other interested parties will have very little say. They will have grabbed control of land use.

The policy will also effectively discriminate between big companies with producing coal mines and new companies who are still exploring or proving up their resources. The big coal producers will be largely unaffected (for the present) by most cropping land bans. They have proved up their resources and have established operations on granted mining leases. But small explorers with permits covered by the new bans may be severely affected.

Overseas competitors for Australian coal or coal finance will be delighted to see sovereign risk emerge as a factor in assessing the attractiveness of Queensland. Already these proposals will be the subject of numerous discussions in coal marketing and financing discussions.

Any proposed legislation also needs to recognise the potential for gaming by landowners desperate to stop mining development on their land. Once a coal deposit starts to be outlined, ploughs may suddenly appear and the bullock paddock will over-night become "cultivated cropland" with an application in the mail to have it classed as "Strategic Cropland".

### ***Slow Death by Planning Committees.***

This proposed legislation will create yet another layer of committees charged with assessing the "community benefit" of every development proposal. The question is not whether or not we have planning of resource developments. The question is who is best situated to do the planning quickly and efficiently. It is a question of centralised planning vs decentralised planning.

Central planning was given a full scale test in all the comrade societies that blighted human progress in the twentieth century. Any observer could compare the results: East Germany vs West Germany; North Korea vs South Korea; Singapore vs Cuba; Hong Kong vs Mao's China; USA vs USSR. It is clear that de-centralised societies provide more wealth and happiness for their people than the Master Planners. (How many people were shot while trying to get **INTO** East Germany, North Korea or Cuba?)

The useful functions governments can do for the economy are:

- Ensure that development projects do not devalue neighbouring properties with noise or pollution of land, water supplies or air. (And despite what green extremists say, carbon dioxide is NOT a pollutant, because no one has proved any damage and there is much evidence that extra carbon dioxide is a benefit to the environment and all life.)
- Define property rights unambiguously and make sure property rights are protected. Avoid creating more overlapping land rights.
- Record agreements and contracts and take action should either party not fulfil agreed conditions.
- Act against parties who commit fraud, breach of contracts or engage in misleading conduct.

The last thing Queensland needs is yet another Master Planning Committee or a Strategic Cropland Straight Jacket. Master planning by governments never creates anything. All it can do is prohibit progress and delay the investment and production plans of other people. It smothers initiative and innovation and vastly increases the cost of every development proposal. It always works in favour of the biggest corporations who have the layers of lawyers and lobbyists to ensure their proposals get smooth passage. And it allows politicians to impose their value judgements on everyone else. Unfortunately, their main goal is not community benefit, but political power.

## ***Summary and Conclusions***

Our conclusions are:

- This proposed policy change will mainly affect two classes of property owners – the landowners themselves and those with coal exploration rights or ambitions. This submission is confined to these two matters.
- The main effect will be to destroy asset value for both classes of property owners. It will also introduce uncertainty and devalue the reputation of Queensland as a safe place to invest.
- To plan on introducing this policy in “early 2011” is too fast. Such a fundamental change deserves far more consideration and consultation.
- There is no clear line dividing “Strategic Cropping Land” from other agricultural land. The boundaries are thus arbitrary and subject to challenge.

- Land which will grow crops is not limited. Yields can be improved with better management, poor land can be upgraded, topography changed, water and weed management changed and food can be grown on reclaimed land, or using hydroponics, terrace farming, fodder factories or urban farming.
- With the machinery and skills available to Australians, it is easy to create new locations on which to relocate crop growing. And many other ways to produce food on minimal land. To replace all food produced on the tiny areas of crop land lost to open cut coal mines would not be difficult or expensive.
- The coal resources of Queensland are large, but they are not unlimited. Deposits that are feasible to mine today are hard to find.
- It is impossible to move a coal deposit so it can be mined in a new location.
- There is no food production crisis in Queensland and it would take diabolical political skill to create one. If there were any concern on food production there are many anti-food policies that could be undone at the stroke of a pen. Allowing coal exploration or mining on a few small corners of cropping land will have no measurable impact on our food security.
- Australia is in danger of becoming famous for the extent of valuable mineral, land, timber and fishing resources locked away, unable to be explored or exploited. In a world generally short of food and energy resources, these attractive mothballed resources are becoming a strategic liability for future Australians. Development bans on “cropping land” will make things strategically worse.
- Some landowners have a genuine concern to prevent exploration or mining on their land. Some have a long family history of connection with their land. Others are concerned at a long series of policies developed over many years which have whittled away landowner rights and granted overlapping rights to other groups. They see the proposed policies as reversing this trend. However, the current proposals remove more rights from landowners and destroy rights already granted to coal explorers or developers. They are more concerned with gaining control of land use than with food security. No one who values their rights should support these proposals.
- Both landowners and coal explorers must be compensated for any rights lost if the current proposals become law.
- Some of those promoting this policy are working to other anti-carbon agendas. They are more interested in fomenting genuine farmer concern as a means of crippling the growth of the coal industry.

- Mining is the greatest force for unsubsidised decentralisation in Australia. Towns, roads, railways, ports, power lines and telephone services have all followed the mines and the taxes and royalties from mining are a key item in every state budget. It is a foolish politician who undermines future growth of Queensland's biggest industry for spurious "food security" reasons.
- Coal mining is no threat to food supply or land rights. We can have coal AND crops.

### ***Recommendations.***

- The government should drop these proposals to create still more no-go zones over land in Queensland.
- Even if the government feels it must be seen to do something, development bans should still be rejected.
- There should be no changes to land tenure conditions that retrospectively affect the rights of either landowners or those holding exploration or development tenures.
- If it is decided to do something about development on cropping land, the least worst option would be to give landowners themselves (not committees of bureaucrats) veto rights over development applications on those parts of freehold land classed as "Strategic Cropping Land". This power should not apply retrospectively to any exploration or development tenures already granted.
- Any legislation must include provisions for compensation for those holding land or mining tenures affected by this proposal.

Viv Forbes

Chairman, The Carbon Sense Coalition

[www.carbon-sense.com](http://www.carbon-sense.com)

Phone 07 5464 0533

Email: [Info@carbon-sense.com](mailto:Info@carbon-sense.com)

30 September 2010

Another comment on this proposal to ban mining on crop land can be found at:

<http://carbon-sense.com/2010/09/04/cropping-land/>

***Disclosure: The above report was produced by Viv Forbes with assistance from other members of the Carbon Sense Coalition. No one prompted or paid us to produce it.***

***Viv Forbes is a geologist, mineral economist, pastoralist and political gadfly with long experience of exploration, agriculture, mining and politics in Queensland. He is a non-executive director of a small Australian coal exploration company and the freehold grazing property he owns with his wife is affected by vegetation protection orders and a gas exploration permit. Luckily it has not yet been classed as "Strategic Cropping Land" by Big Brother.***