

Deep Greens & Big Coal win on Cropping Land Bans. Everyone else loses.

The Queensland State Government has announced a plan to create a new category of restricted land called “Strategic Cropping Land” which bans mining or development. This could blight 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.

Farmers should not celebrate this cynical move by an anti-farming state government to pepper Queensland with more restrictions on their land titles.

The justification is “to secure food security for future generations”. It is just another phase in the war on carbon fuels aimed at preventing development of new coal mines and power stations in Australia. It is more about Green ideology than about concern about farmers or food.

If Queensland’s politicians were really concerned about food security they would not have sterilised millions of acres of grazing land under scrub clearing bans, conservation zones, heritage areas, national parks and other anti-farming bans.

Nor would they have encouraged the diversion of cropping land from producing food for humans to producing ethanol for cars; or used false global warming dogma to justify covering food producing land with feral forests of carbon credit trees.

The policy that allows tenures for exploration, mining, gas, geothermal, carbon sequestration, vegetation preservation and heritage protection to be imposed without agreement on freehold land (and on one another) is a bad policy guaranteed to create friction between overlapping tenure holders. Cropping land bans just add to the complexity and the problems.

Farmers will soon realise the liability generated by these new blots on their land title. No longer can farmers look forward to the possibility of selling their land for far more than its cropping value to a coal developer. Nor can they retire and subdivide the land which represents their life savings. And any other developments on their blighted land will be banned or difficult. Imagine the obstacles should they want to develop a race horse stud, a feed lot, a new house or a private forest?

Farmers will be condemned to be pastoral peasants on cropping land controlled forever, paddock by paddock, by an anti-farming, anti-mining bureaucracy. Landowners, not bureaucrats, should decide what happens on freehold land.

And their children will be forced to move away to get jobs. Exploration and mining are the keys to unsubsidised decentralisation and regional development. Roads, railways, ports, regional towns and local jobs always follow mine developments. Future job growth will be confined to the bureaucracy in Brisbane.

Imagine if politicians of the pioneering era had banned prospectors from “strategic wool, wheat or cattle country” – there would be no towns at Mount Isa, Charters Towers, Weipa, Ravenshoe, Herberton, Stanthorpe, Mt Morgan, Gympie, Chillagoe, Ipswich, Blair Athol, Collinsville, Moura, Moranbah, Glenden, Dysart, Middelmount or Blackwater; far poorer roads, railways, ports and regional cities; and fewer tax-funded hospitals, roads, schools, stadiums and politicians’ palaces in Brisbane.

These foolish bans will not last. As soon as current coal mines start to close and the flow of coal taxes and royalties to governments diminishes, “Strategic cropping land” will suddenly be reclassified as “Projects of State Significance”. But other generations will be the beneficiaries.

Mineral explorers have also been robbed. They were granted exploration licences by the same State Government, have spent money exploring them, and the value of their permits has now been destroyed or devalued. Who is going to pay compensation for the destruction of both farming and exploration assets?

The hidden tragedy is that we will never know which wheat paddock is underlain by a treasure house of coal or minerals.

One group, Big Coal, will be quietly pleased by the new restrictions.

Producing coal mines with many years of reserves in established mining leases will benefit as small coal explorers are denied access to prospective exploration land in new areas. Well developed mines in the Bowen Basin will survive until current resources are exhausted, but new mines in the Surat and Galilee Basins will struggle to become established. Australia’s international competitors in the coal business (Indonesia, Mongolia, Canada, South Africa and USA) will also be delighted with our green puppets in Parliament.

Deep Green and **Big Coal** have had a **Big Win**.

Farmers, coal explorers, energy consumers and regional jobs will be **Big Losers**.

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