

Subject: Submission: Landholders' Rights to Refuse Bill 2015
Date: Saturday, 9 May 2015 10:08:36 AM

Submission:

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Inquiry into Landholders' Rights to Refuse (Gas and Coal) Bill 2015.

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While history has permitted mining to take precedence over farming operations, both the extent of mining and methods of extraction employed today, bring into question, whether the landholder's rights need revision.

When the 'right to mine' laws were established, mining was very low key. It was a pick and shovel task, often digging horizontal tunnels into the side of stony hillsides. The arrival of crude mechanisation enabled considerable expansion and delivered more 'product' per man hour but it was quite meagre compared to the modern scene.

In the 21st century, the machinery is so massive that whole hills and small mountains are devoured within a couple of years. A regular 6 foot man is dwarfed by the machines, many of which are 'driven' from a computer in a city office. New techniques of extraction are employed with potential detrimental side-effects to the environment.

All of the above has delivered a massive expansion of mining. Most are owned by multi-national corporations which care little about their impact on the relatively few farmers.

The miners move into communities with offers of employment and donations to sporting bodies as 'sweeteners' which cause the farmers to be isolated. This reduces the political impact the farmers might have in their bid to protect their enterprise.

Farming is a generational business where the ancestors probably cleared the land and each following generation further developed the property to a productive enterprise. They have a bond with their piece of land rarely seen in other forms of business - they do not want to lose it or have it ruined!

Australia has a wonderful record for producing clean and green food and fibre which is sought by markets around the world. We need to ensure that such ability is maintained into the future to supply the increasing world population.

In recognition of the vast advances that have been witnessed in the mining process, it is time to reconsider the ancient 'right to mine' protocol and give due consideration to the farmer who has nurtured the topsoil for generations. While most concern may be directed to our relatively small area of productive agricultural land (about 4% of total land area); properties beyond that zone have just as much need to have their rights enhanced too.

I trust the 'right to farm' will be given the status it deserves.

Ken Grundy

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