



# IN THE NEWS

## GOVT 'ABANDONS' LANDHOLDERS

SURAT BASIN LANDHOLDERS CLAIM PASSING OF MINING BILL LEAVES THEM WITHOUT RIGHTS

**L**ANDHOLDERS have been hit hard after the Queensland Government passed a law that will take away their rights to object resource developments. The Mineral and Energy Resources Bill, which passed in parliament this month, would see proposed "low-impact mines" no longer having to notify the public about environmental authority applications. Macalister farmer and chair of the Basin Sustainability Alliance David Hamilton (pictured) was one of many landholders across the region feeling abandoned by his government. "It's disgraceful behaviour from a government that seems intent on placing the interests of mining companies in front of the rights of Queenslanders," Mr Hamilton said. "Whether it's low impact or not, just the principle of being able to put in an objection and have the opportunity to receive compensation is a basic democratic right." Mr Hamilton has lived on his Macalister farm for 25 years and said he "certainly wouldn't

want a gas well near it". "I'm not opposed to mining or coal seam gas, but there is a place for it, and that place is not right at the back door of our homes," he said. The bill would still see coal and large-scale mines following the current notification process, but Mr Hamilton said it wasn't good enough. "There should be public notification and objection rights available to anyone who has a legitimate concern about proposed mining activity. It is not adequate that we are only able to have a say in the conditions of some mines," he said. Natural Resources Minister Andrew Cripps told parliament the majority of mining leases issued in Queensland carried low environmental risk. He said small mines must also cause less than 10ha of significant disturbance at a time, have no more than 20 employees and be removed from environmentally sensitive areas.

"Not one community or green group made an objection to these small mines," he said. Mr Hamilton said there still needed to be clarity around the location of mining infrastructure. "Distances from residences have not been clarified in the bill, so this will be left up to regulation. We are hearing that this is likely to be prescribed as 200 metres," he said. "I'm sure Minister for Natural Resources and Mines Andrew Cripps would not want his family to have to live only 200 metres from mining infrastructure, why should other rural Queenslanders have to do so?" The Bill – touted as modernising Queensland's resources legislation – came up against fierce opposition when it went through the parliamentary committee process. Shine Lawyers, which has helped negotiate hundreds of land-access arrangements in the past six years, and industry group Cotton Australia feared landholders would be worse off when it came to their rights, suggesting

public objection rights for 90% of proposed mines would be lost. Opposition environment spokeswoman Jackie Trad, objecting to the bill, said landholders no longer able to object would include an agricultural producer with a creek running through their operation that has impacts from an upstream mine. "The claims made by this government that it is inequitable for mining companies to have to publicly notify an application for a mining lease when this isn't required for residential or retail development is complete and utter nonsense," she said. "An open-cut mine with a 30-year life is not a comparable development with a new Woolies store down the corner. This argument is verging on the satirical and stupid. "In essence, this bill seeks to pervert land use management arrangements in our state by stacking the process in favour of big miners and the resources industry at the expense of landholders, rural communities and all Queenslanders."