



Caroon Coal Action Group Inc.

www.ccag.org.au PO Box 119 Caroon NSW 2343

SAVE THE LIVERPOOL PLAINS FROM COAL AND GAS DEVELOPMENTS
THREATENING FUTURE FOOD AND WATER
WINTER FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN 2009

It is over twelve months now since the CCAG launched its last major fundraiser – the 100 Club Sorghum Drive. The committee has been grateful for the support shown by the community not only in that campaign, but throughout the CCAG’s 3 year history. Unfortunately, the traceability of sorghum donations in particular has meant that it has not always been possible to personally thank each and every one of you for your support, but we are proud that it has truly been a community effort, and a community campaign. Of course the stakes are high, and always have been, and any precedents set in this district will have far reaching consequences for the wider community both state and maybe even Australia wide.

Although a “silver bullet” is unfortunately elusive, with each action the committee is building a bigger profile, and a bigger case to make politicians aware of the need for legislative change to protect our valuable water resources, existing agricultural industry and natural environment for future generations. There is no doubt that essential scientific knowledge about the coal and gas resources in this region, and their proximity to our valuable water supplies should have been resourced **prior** to the granting of any exploration licenses, but we remain resolute that without it, any such developments carry unacceptable risk. We are incredibly lucky to have so many passionate people in our community who are willing to give so much towards this end. Unfortunately nobody has really fought this battle successfully before, so we ask for your patience - we are still learning as we go along, but it is now so clear to us that “people power” is the only way to achieve the legislative change we need to ensure the protection of this wonderful and valuable future food producing area. We must remain credible as we fight to this end.

This year we have lobbied extensively, both by hosting politicians in our district and by travelling to Sydney and Canberra to meet with them there. We are particularly indebted to Tony Windsor for his help in the federal sphere. The SOS Liverpool Plains has conducted, amongst other activities, an intensive letter writing campaign which has resulted in more and more politicians being aware of who we are and what we are fighting for. We have also made major submissions to the Senate Enquiry for Food Production led by Senator Heffernan. We plan to host more politicians in the district in the lead-up to the next state election.

For 8 long months, members of our committee were also involved in the drafting of Terms of Reference for a catchment-wide Water Study. NSW State Minister Macdonald has now announced Mal Peters as Chair of the oversight committee, so until we see the final terms of reference that have been accepted by the Minister, we are cautiously optimistic that the catchment will now receive the independent, scientifically robust examination of its underground and surface waters that it should have received prior to any exploration licenses being granted. We now hear that Ulan is also calling for a similar study, so an important precedent has been set here.

The community has continued to support the Blockade at Rossmar Park, about to celebrate its 1 year anniversary in July. It has received over 3000 separate visits to date and a big thank you to everyone who gives up their valuable time to support it. This community action really focused the

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State government's attention on the Water Study giving us a seat at the negotiating table. It continues to do so at this critical time.

Members of the committee have also worked with NSW Farmers Association in the development of a new guide to Landholder Access Agreements, which is now available on their website. This resource is essential reading for any farmer faced with an application for access to their land for mining.

The community has also completely funded the legal costs for 10 farmers through the arbitration and Mining Warden Court process, one Supreme Court Action, and with the assistance of the Australian Farmers Fighting Fund (AFFF), a very long, involved and public access dispute test case for two families in the Mining Warden's Court with Senior Counsel from Sydney. Although yet to have a significant "win", the community has highlighted serious deficiencies in the process, and significant concerns about pollution caused by the drilling processes of BHP Billiton which have been published in the press, and furthered our case politically. The AFFF will not take on any case without significant prospects of a win, and a precedent being set, so it was immensely disappointing, and somewhat surprising to receive the Mining Warden's judgment.

Legal actions remain our major cost, with several more in the pipeline, but with the assistance of the EDO and AFFF we believe we are fortunate to get real value for money.

So – where has last year's money gone? Our complete financial statements will be available at our Annual General Meeting, but by way of summary, our costs have roughly been:

Legal	\$108,000
Printing (Yellow Stickers, Triangles, Posters and Signs)	\$ 11,000
Media/PR	\$ 25,000
Travel/Admin/Website Hosting Fee/General	\$ 2,500

Committee members continue to absorb nearly all other costs – travel, phone, postage etc, so your committee believes it has been able to channel your generously donated funds where they've been most needed.

Recently many of us travelled to Sydney to see the Greens' Bill for the protection of Prime Agricultural Land debated on the floor of the Upper House. All speakers (bar the Government) spoke of the need for balance in our community between the need for energy and the need for food, and we believe that this is only the beginning of the debate that the State has to have.

We have great plans for the year ahead. This will unfortunately involve more legal costs, and a great deal of political lobbying, and media/press to get the message out. We have asked Minister Macdonald to excise the floodplain from BHP's exploration license, and in the coming months will work towards that goal, as well as a complete review, in conjunction with NSW Farmers Association, of the mining and planning legislation in the state to take account of valuable agricultural land, and our valuable water rights. With Santos and Shenhua now active as well, we now more than ever urgently need your help. We are happy to take donations of sorghum, which

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can be picked up off-farm or delivered to our Graincorp NGR number, or you can donate directly to the Namoi Valley Environmental Protection Fund.

With a state election looming, the next twelve months will be vital in our campaign to save the Liverpool Plains. The coalition has some impressive statements on record, and we will need to ensure they keep to their word. We hope we can count on your continued support at this crucial time.

Yours sincerely,
CCAG Committee

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Sorghum deliveries: To arrange pickup ring Michael Clift or Kate Davidson
To deliver into Graincorp quote NGR 12758812
For more information ring Michael Clift 0427 668936 or Kate Davidson on 0428 441752

For donations: Direct deposit to CCAG or Namoi Valley Environmental Fund.
BSB 082 807
Account No 792955875
Please send email to frank.mckinley@bigpond.com.au with details of deposit

Post cheques to: PO Box 119, Caroona NSW 2343

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