

Lee Rhiannon  
The Greens  
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### **Farmers blockade BHP Billiton's Caroono coal operations**

Greens MP and mining spokesperson Lee Rhiannon has congratulated Caroono farmers for today's blockade of BHP Billiton exploratory drilling operations and has called for government funding of an independent Namoi Valley water study.

"The 150 farmers and their families supporting the blockade of BHP Billiton exploratory rigs entering the Duddy property at Caroono highlights the failure of the NSW government to protect agricultural land and stand up for the rights of farmers", Ms Rhiannon said.

"The Greens are backing the call of local farmers and of New England MP Tony Windsor for an independent catchment wide study of the aquifer structure and surface water of the Namoi Valley.

"The state and federal governments should fully fund this study into the impact coal exploration and mining will have on Caroono underground and surface water reserves.

"The Liverpool Plains Land Management Committee has already mapped out and costed a catchment wide surface and groundwater study of the Upper Namoi Catchment.

"Considering the NSW government pocketed a tidy \$100 million from BHP Billiton to explore the Liverpool Plains, spending \$8 million to conduct a study to help safeguard water supplies is no big ask.

**"A moratorium should be placed on all Caroono coal exploration until the study is commissioned.**

"BHP Billiton's current Caroono exploration activities involve no hydrologists or associated water studies so information about the aquifers is currently being lost.

"The Caroono farmers protesting today are standing up for environmental protection against a state and federal government who continually fail to put any meaningful limits on the destructive practices of the mining industry.

"The profit interests of BHP Billiton should not drive a project that will jeopardise the Namoi catchment and the livelihoods of people farming this valuable agricultural land.

"Assurances from BHP Billiton that it will not damage aquifers in the area cannot be trusted," Ms Rhiannon said.

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