

Farmers' rights key in balance between mining and agriculture

Central Queensland landholders were encouraged to exercise their rights when dealing with resource companies to safeguard the balance between agriculture and mining at AgForce Projects CSG information sessions last week.

The sessions in Springsure, Capella, Moranbah and Nebo gave landholders an overview of the rapidly expanding CSG industry in the Bowen Basin and tips on how to negotiate the best possible conduct and compensation agreement (CCA) to minimise the impacts of CSG activity on the farming sector.

Capella producer Philip Reid, 'Penaddi', said he had genuine concerns for his properties in Central Queensland but the workshop provided him with vital information and ways to prepare for dealing with resource companies.

"I'm concerned about a number of our properties given all the activity that is happening across the region. I have already had contact with coal mining companies and realise CSG may be just around the corner too. We've all heard the stories and I just want to be prepared before we are approached," Mr Reid said.

AgForce Projects CSG officer Daniel Phipps said new land access laws provide landholders with greater rights than in the past and apply to both CSG and other types of mining.

"Coal mining has been part of the Central Queensland landscape for many years and while CSG is a relatively young industry in comparison it is now expanding rapidly so landholders need to be fully informed," Mr Phipps said.

"Fortunately, the new land access laws introduced in 2010 cover the exploration phases for both CSG and coal mining activities, and include mandatory provisions that resource companies must adhere to including conduct and compensation agreements and minimum negotiation timeframes."

Mr Phipps explained that the new laws provide greater balance between mining and agriculture but it is still important that landholders actively exercise their rights to ensure they can co-exist with CSG.

"While resource companies are required to comply with the mandatory provisions of the land access code, no two properties are the same so it is important you have provisions specific to your property included in your CCA.

"Legislation stipulates that resource companies conducting authorised activities must not unreasonably interfere with landholders lawful activities, so you have the right to have a say in how they conduct themselves on your property and where they can and cannot go.

"Property maps are a great tool to assist landholders to demonstrate how the proposed activities may impact on the landholder, their business and their resources, and are therefore critical as evidence in the negotiation process."

Mr Phipps said there is a minimum timeframe of 20 business days for landholders and resource companies to negotiate a conduct and compensation agreement before any activity can begin.

"This is a minimum not a maximum, so don't feel pressured to sign an agreement before you are ready. You are well within your rights to take the time to prepare and compile the information you need to negotiate a fair deal."

The sessions also provided landholders with a number of possible conduct provisions to have included in a CCA including restrictions on driving on wet roads and mandatory vehicle wash down and inspections units to prevent the spread of specific weeds not already included on the Government's list of declared pests and weeds.

Sessions were delivered free to all producers through funding from the Queensland Government. Producers looking for more information can contact (07) 3238 6048 or visit www.agforceprojects.org.au to request an information session in their town.

For comment call AgForce Projects manager Sue Dillon on (07) 3236 3100 or 0417 760 481 or Daniel Phipps 0428 189 086. Media contact: AgForce Projects communications officer Madeline Cooper (07) 3238 6060 or 0488 002 091

Photo captions

AgForce Projects CSG officer Dan Corfe and Philip Reid, 'Penaddi', Capella, at an AgForce Projects landholder CSG information session in Capella on Tuesday 18 October

IMG_0253 – Caption: AgForce Projects CSG officer Daniel Phipps explains the stages of CSG negotiations to landholders at a Nebo landholder CSG information session on Thursday 20 October.