

Mining and Agriculture Co-existing Forum at Rockhampton

I attended the Fitzroy Basin Association Co-Existence forum two weeks ago to see how closely aligned the mining and agricultural sectors are after 2 or 3 decades and how they could work together for the future of Queensland. Well, until the first speaker was finished, I thought it was all about working together and both industries combining for Queensland's future. However, it was all guns blazing from the start as Queensland Resource Councils, Director of Environment and Social Policy Ms Francis Hayter told us, "It was farmers who had caused the damage to the Great Barrier Reef and they needed to recognise this responsibility first". "And that miners did not need lines on maps to protect towns etc, but instead needed more freedom to negotiate." Well pardon me, from our knowledge many of the members of the resources council (mining companies) do not negotiate, they steam roll any farmer in their way and often make a mockery of legislation. I for one want to see lots more detail to legislation and guidelines. Strict rules are needed more than ever before to ensure our land, our families and our futures are not destroyed for a short term gain by people with questionable morals.

Not sure if it was just me, but I was gob-smacked to hear a seriously one sided, mining representative criticising the agri-sector so blatantly without anyone to balance the argument. After all, it is the resource sector that has created so much disharmony and environmental degradation in the bush in past decades. Yes, mining has been great for the economy and jobs, but we are still to see any real proof that mined areas can be rehabilitated for production or the environment. We may end up with a wasteland of mined areas that are useless for agriculture in decades to come. And then where does our food come from? In fact, it seriously is the pot calling the kettle black.

Although the other speakers were very knowledgeable and spoke well in their fields, this attack on farmers stayed with me for several hours and we did not have enough time to get our thoughts or questions together to rebut Ms Hayter. My thoughts post this forum are: The two industries need to work together, but could never agree while Ms Hayter is at the negotiating table – it would always need to be WIN/ LOSE from their point of view. After the forum I spoke to a few of the farmers in attendance and they all seemed shocked that this forum created more of a rift than was already in place and simply blamed the farming sector. I sincerely hope this young lady is not involved in any negotiations with me with in the future. Our region and state require visionary people, such as the board of FBA who can see past the negative jibes and put in place a strategy where the future of our communities, production base and economy are developed from the short term riches being created in coming decades. With that in mind, I am hoping the FBA can develop a second forum and invite speakers who truly want a future for both sectors working together.