



Legal aid for CQ farmers

State farm group AgForce welcomes extra legal support from the Queensland government to help Central Queensland landholders negotiate with resource companies.

Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining Stirling Hinchcliffe today announced \$300,000 to fund a travelling legal officer in CQ to advise property owners about access and compensation issues.

AgForce was instrumental in securing Queensland's first specialist rural Legal Aid officer in Toowoomba, and since then has been lobbying for similar assistance in other areas of the state.

AgForce CEO Robert Walker said the position is an acknowledgement of the serious need for landholders to be empowered in their dealings with CSG and coal mining companies.

"We are seeing exponential growth in mineral exploration and production across much of Queensland's most valuable farming and grazing country, but still an unacceptable power imbalance exists between landholders and multi-national resources companies," Mr Walker said.

"The State governments funding of a Legal Aid officer in CQ goes some way towards levelling the playing field, and we congratulate the Mines Minister Stirling Hinchcliffe for heeding our calls."

AgForce urges all landholders entering into negotiations with resources companies to seek professional legal advice, with Legal Aid just one of their options to provide that help.

Negotiating a conduct and compensation agreement (CCA) with a mining or CSG company can be a complex and costly exercise, but there is now a legislative requirement for resource operators to cover a property owners 'reasonable' legal costs.

"We will continue to lobby the state government for similar assistance for landholders in other parts of Queensland to keep pace with resource developments in areas that have never before faced these pressures," Mr Walker said.

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Who is AgForce? AgForce represents thousands of Queensland broadacre producers who recognise the value in having a strong voice. AgForce leads the way to ensure agriculture's social, economic and environmental contribution is recognised by all levels of government. AgForce works alongside landholders, encourages and supports the next generation, builds industry partnerships and skills and promotes agriculture - for secure, sustainable, progressive and profitable food and fibre into the future.