

21 June 2011

To The Nationals,

In a National Party Latest News release dated 30 May 2011 *Treacherous carbon tax will push grain farmers to the brink*¹ the Leader of The Nationals, the Hon. Warren Truss MP, is quoted as follows "Australia is self-sufficient in food production and the envy of the world for our sustainable, high quality and reliable farming practices, which support entire regional communities and supply most of the food we rely on every day in this country". "To knowingly put that at risk is an act of treachery by this government against its own people. Selling out our farmers is contrary to our national interests, but no doubt has our international competitors licking their lips."

I believe allowing Coal Seam Gas (CSG) mining on highly productive agricultural land² is knowingly putting our farmers at risk and therefore must also be considered an act of treachery by government in the eyes of Mr. Truss. So why is it then that the National Party is selling out farmers by not leading the call for exclusions of such land from exploration, drilling and mining? I cannot help but suspect some ulterior motive given the former National Party leader John Anderson's position as Chairman on the board of Eastern Star Gas.

To add insult to injury the very person I elected to represent me at a State level, the Member for Barwon Kevin Humphries, had the audacity to question the value of a community meeting held at Bellata stating "I think it was designed to scare people more than inform people"³. I was at that meeting and guess what? I was informed and now I am scared. Perhaps in light of the stresses associated with the uncertainty surrounding CSG mining Mr. Humphries will be better placed to represent me in his capacity as Minister for Mental Health.

Unlike many of my generation I was encouraged to pursue a career in agriculture, my parents believed there was a future for me on the land and actively encouraged me to join the family business. Now as a 4th generation farmer in my early 30's the current political landscape is causing me to seriously rethink my future and any role I play in farming. Agriculture is an industry that requires massive capital and personal investment, it is not something that you enter into, or exit from, lightly. For the most part the required skills are not something easily learned over a few years of study, they are acquired over a lifetime of living and breathing the business.

So I ask Mr. Truss, when the next generation of farmers has thrown in the towel taking with them generations of knowledge how do you propose to maintain Australia's self-sufficient food production which you so rightly declare as being in the national interests?

If the answer eludes you may I suggest as leader of the National Party you use your party's political voice at a Federal and State level to once and for all put an end to the uncertainty created by Coal Seam Gas mining and call for legislation whereby highly productive agricultural lands are classified as exclusion zones and thereby removed from exploration, drilling and mining.

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1. <http://www.nationals.org.au/News/LatestNews/tabid/94/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/6452/categoryId/1/Treacherous-carbon-tax-will-push-grain-farmers-to-the-brink.aspx>
2. The NSW Liberals and Nationals *Strategic Regional Land Use Policy* defines strategic agricultural land as being highly productive agricultural land that has both unique natural resource characteristics (such as soil and water resources) as well as socio-economic value (such as high productivity, infrastructure and access to markets).
3. <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2011/06/06/3236618.htm>