



Queensland Greens, PO Box 661, Albion BC, 4010

## Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry.

### **Addendum to the Submission from the Queensland Greens**

Thank you for the opportunity to add a further point to our submission.

Our submission focuses firstly on the problem of tree clearing for gas development which may be contributing to factors causing floods and secondly the problem of additional flood water contamination caused by coal and gas developments in catchments prone to flooding. It did not discuss health and safety aspects of mine and gas operations. The mining industry has often boasted of its safety record in Queensland<sup>1</sup> and so the submission did not make any comments relating to health and safety in the immediate environs of mines but rather on broader problems of harm to river ecosystems, irrigation and drinking water.

However news of health problems caused by blasting in open-cut mine sites affected by wet conditions was recently made public. Twenty-four mine workers were hospitalised in March 2011<sup>2</sup> and reports this week indicate further hospitalisations occurred on Saturday 2 April.<sup>3</sup> The Explosives Inspectorate of the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation reports that post-blast fumes are highly toxic and mostly invisible; when blasting is carried out in wet conditions there can be an increase in post blast fumes and this was the cause of four events in March 2011 which resulted in the hospitalisation of mine workers. The Explosives Inspectorate Alert also discusses fatalities from similar incidents which have occurred in the United States and the Philippines in recent years.

In the incident that occurred on 2 April, the company reported that the workers were more than 10 kilometres from the blast site.

This data adds to the concern of the Queensland Greens about mine and gas development in the flood-prone rivers of southern Queensland which are much more intensely settled than that of the Fitzroy. At the moment exploration permits for coal mining have been issued for Gowrie Junction and for Hodgson Vale. Both these regions are outer suburbs of Toowoomba and within 10 kilometres of the Toowoomba CBD.

We believe this adds to the need for state-based regional land use planning. Such planning would have authority to ensure that vulnerable activities such as coal and gas development were excluded from Queensland's most flood-prone river systems.

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<sup>1</sup> See comments by Minister Stirling Hinchliffe, 'Qld to develop new blasting guidelines', *Australian Mining*, 21 March 2011. Available at: <http://www.miningaustralia.com.au/news/qld-to-develop-new-blasting-guidelines>. Accessed 7 April 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Explosives Inspectorate, *Prevention and Management of blast Fumes*, Safety Alert No. 44 V2, 15 March 2011. Available at: [http://www.dme.qld.gov.au/mines/safety\\_compliance.cfm](http://www.dme.qld.gov.au/mines/safety_compliance.cfm). Accessed 7 April 2011.

<sup>3</sup> 'Blast fumes injure miners,' *Australian Mining*, 5 April 2011. Available at: <http://www.miningaustralia.com.au/news/Blast-fumes-injure-miners>. Accessed 7 April 2011.