

Dear Members,

As you would be aware, Peter Spencer agreed to end his hunger strike this week. We are pleased he has agreed to look after his health, and trust that he will recover quickly.



The Association will build upon the profile for the issues Mr Spencer, and indeed all of us, have been concerned about. We've been backing the issues relating to property rights for a number of years. We have supported financially the legal battles that have been waged regarding these points, as well as spending hundreds of hours lobbying and working towards change for you and all our Members.

This includes supporting, together with the National Farmers' Federation, Mr Spencer's application for assistance through the Australian Farmers Fighting Fund for legal cases against the NSW and Commonwealth Governments. The case against the State Government is based on the impact which native vegetation laws have on the productive capacity of Mr Spencer's land. The case against the Commonwealth Government is based upon whether the Commonwealth has an obligation through the Constitution to provide compensation to landholders for carbon credits which are taken by the Commonwealth. With our support, Mr Spencer has received substantial financial assistance from the Association and the AFFF for his legal cases.

The Association will continue to seek further improvements in native vegetation and climate change policy by drawing public attention to many of the issues that have been raised in recent days. Examples of recent work include the Association's 2009 submission on the Native Vegetation Act review (which highlighted the inequity of shifting the cost of biodiversity conservation and emission reduction onto private landholders) as well as concerns regarding the carbon pollution reduction scheme.

We know how much this issue is impacting so many of us. How do we proceed? The legal avenues, one of which is still pending need to be exhausted so as to gather evidence and specific details of failure in the constitution. But ultimately, the outcomes to date would suggest this is a battle that will only be won in Parliament. So that is where we will take the battle next.

Over the coming weeks we hope to keep you informed of all the details regarding a possible rally in Canberra, and we will also ensure you are kept informed of all the other action we are undertaking. Keep your ear out for me in the media – I've posted a couple of radio interviews that I've done this week on our [website](#) so you can hear them, as well as check out the other media we've done of this topic in recent weeks (you'll need your Member login).

On a final note, since my last email we have certainly experienced some extremes of weather. Notably over Christmas, some of our prayers for rain were answered. Your Association is working with Industry and Investment NSW to help those adversely affected by flooding, with the recovery expected to take months.

The most recent drought figures do remind us however, that despite some good falls, the drought continues its grip on many of us. As we rapidly move into 2010, our thoughts and hopes are for good follow up rain. Our lobbying is to ensure we are all well supported whatever happens in the rain gauges.

**Until next fortnight,  
Charles Armstrong**

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