

Qld farmers vow to lock out miners

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Farmers in the Felton Valley west of Brisbane have vowed to lock out mining company representatives carrying out exploration work for an open-cut coal mine.

The anti-mine group Friends of Felton says up 100 farmers will lock their gates and refuse Amber Energy permission to access their land.

Amber Energy wants to develop an open-cut coal mine about 30km southwest of Toowoomba, alongside a petrochemical plant to convert the coal into liquid fuel, and a power station.

The company is accessing farm land in the valley to explore coal deposits. It's also conducting research for an environmental impact statement (EIS) on its proposed projects, which is due next year.

Friends of Felton spokesman Rob McCreath said farmers were prepared to go to court to keep the mining company out.

"If our members refuse to allow them access, and eventually those people are taken to the Land Court, well we're happy to support them and stand by them," Mr McCreath told AAP.

"Our patience has been tested and we're not willing to cooperate any more."

Mr McCreath said farmers had originally supported exploration and research on their land, but had a change of heart after losing faith in the federal government's EIS process.

The federal government last month approved two coal seam gas projects for the nearby Surat Basin on the condition they meet 300 environmental conditions.

"We can't rely on the EIS to act in the public interest," Mr McCreath said.

"We were under the impression the EIS process was there to decide if a project should go ahead or not, but experience shows it's not that, it's simply there to allow projects to go ahead with a few token conditions."

Amber Energy spokesman Neil McGregor said none of the company's researchers had been denied access so far.

"We haven't had any issue so far with gaining access to land for our EIS studies and we have a very good relationship with all of the people in the project area," Mr McGregor told AAP.

Mr McGregor acknowledged the company needed landholder consent to conduct the studies on thousands of hectares in the valley.

He said he was seeking legal advice before offering further comment.

Felton farmers to lock gates

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- THE Friends of Felton have started a campaign of "civil disobedience" against the company that is planning to build an open cut coal mine at Felton.

Ambre Energy is currently conducting an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for a proposal to establish the large open-cut coal mine and petrochemical gasification plant in the highly productive Felton Valley, 30km SW of Toowoomba.

Friends of Felton has campaigned for almost three years against the Ambre Energy proposal.

Spokesman Rob McCreath said the group's members would no longer co-operate with Ambre.

"The Ambre Energy project would turn one of Queensland's most productive food-producing regions into an industrial wasteland with terrible consequences for the natural environment and the community. The proposal is simply insane," Mr McCreath said.

"The Government's recent approval of two major coal seam gas projects in the Surat Basin, in spite of serious environmental concerns expressed by the Co-ordinator General, proves that the EIS process is totally inadequate for the assessment of mining projects."

Mr McCreath said the campaign could involve locking gates and blockading roads, but said it would be "strictly non-violent".