

**Media Release**

**9 March 2016**

## **Baird backs the frackers, people back the farmers**

Polling reveals public support for civil disobedience and other protest in support of farmer's rights against gas fracking operations.

The Australia Institute commissioned polling, undertaken by Research Now, about communities conducting civil disobedience in opposition to coal and gas projects in their area.

84% of Australians said farmers should be able to say no to gas drilling or mining on their land. Asked about communities conducting civil disobedience to try to stop mining or gas expansions, 56% of Australians had a favourable attitude with only 8% expressing an unfavourable attitude.

On Monday it was reported the NSW Baird Government gave regulators discretion in giving fines as low as \$5000 (down from up to \$1.1 million) for coal seam gas companies who explore for gas without a permit, while at the same time increasing fines and imposing new laws aimed at protesters conducting civil disobedience

"Farmers are clearly very concerned about fracking, and it would appear that the public are supportive of their actions to protect their land," Executive Director of The Australia Institute, Ben Oquist said.

"The growing movement in regional Australia is remaking the political landscape, not just in the bush, but throughout the country.

"The Baird government decision to simultaneously raise fines for peaceful protest in the bush while lowering fines for miners who cause damage to the land, runs directly against public opinion," Oquist said.

These questions in the poll regarded peaceful civil disobedience in agricultural areas where mining was proposed or operating were asked in late 2015.

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*Should farmers be able to say no to gas drilling or mining on their land?*

Yes	83.8%
No	5.3%
Maybe	10.9%

*Some rural communities facing coal mining or gas drilling in their area feel they have no legal recourse to challenge the activity over concerns for its potential impact on health, water, the environment and farm land. In some cases they have resorted to peaceful civil disobedience, for example 'locking the gate', blocking roads and occupying mine sites. In such cases, people are often arrested and charged.*

*Are you familiar with communities conducting these sorts of activities?*

Very familiar	10.2%
Somewhat familiar	34.6%
Not very familiar	39.7%
Never heard of it	15.4%

*What are your attitudes towards communities conducting such activities?*

Very Favourable	22.8%
Favourable	33.3%
Neutral	35.8%
Unfavourable	6.5%
Very unfavourable	1.6%

Source: The Australia Institute conducted a national survey of 1407 respondents between 24 September and 9 October 2015 using Research Now. Respondents were selected to produce a nationally representative sample by gender, age (18+) and location.

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