

Conservation Council SA – Earth Hour Dinner Speech
Sat 28th March 2015

Joke: How did the farmer find his wife?
He **tractor** down.

My name is Brenton Davey and I'm a fourth generation farmer at Pine Point on Yorke Peninsula, which is straight across St. Vincent Gulf from Adelaide.

Our farm has been in the family for 140 years and has never been owned by anyone else. My father, who was one of nine children, was born in the homestead where I live.

I grow Malt Barley and wheat, and I am a beef cattle producer for local markets.

Apart from being a very popular holiday destination, the Yorke Peninsula is also one of Australia's prime agricultural regions, consistently contributing over \$400 million dollars to the State's economy each year. The YP produces 25% of the State's grain harvest each year on just 12% of the State's cropping land.

YP is known in some circles as the 'Malt Barley Capital of the World', and enjoys a well-earned reputation for high quality 'Clean & Green' farm produce. You'll find Malting Barley from YP in most glasses of Australian beer and it is now highly sought after by Chinese breweries because of that reputation.

Agriculture is the leading exporter for both our State and our nation, contributing \$144 billion dollars to our economy.

But YP is now seriously under threat from invasive mining, with over 95% of the region now under Mineral Exploration, putting YP at risk forever.

In July 2014, Rex Minerals were given approval by the State Government to develop a vast open-cut copper, gold and iron-ore mine at Hillside, just 12 kilometres south of Ardrossan, which also has pockets of high uranium concentrations.

This mine will be huge. The mining lease covers an area of over 30 square kilometres (which equates to over 3000 hectares, or nearly 7,500 acres) of prime agricultural land.

The open-cut pit (2.4 kms long, by 1km wide and nearly half a km deep) would be big enough for the Adelaide CBD to fit inside it. The pit would be less than 500 metres from the pristine waters of St Vincent Gulf. Adelaide is only 60 kms away, as the crow flies.

There will be huge Waste Rock dumps, the highest reaching 115 metres. This is almost as high as the tallest building in Adelaide – the Westpac building.

A massive tailings dam, covering 400 hectares (or 990 acres) will sit within the largest of the Waste rock dumps. This is equivalent to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the size of most farms on the YP.

All this for a mine life of only 12 years!

Our farm is within Rex Minerals Mining Lease, so they need our land for mining operations. The open-cut pit abuts the fenceline of our eastern boundary, and is only 1 km away from our century old heritage homestead, which has picturesque views of the beautiful St Vincent Gulf and Black Point.

In August 2014, Rex Minerals announced that due to falling commodity prices, and their inability to secure the required finance of \$900 million dollars to build the mine, they would look at scaling back to a small-scale start up.

Rex have already purchased 3 farms in the mining lease, which they acquired during a drought period, and they still need to acquire 6 more farms, with one of these under agreement. At no stage have I ever signed a waiver and I have refused to sell our farm.

The exploration companies have been predatory in their approach, by playing on the farmers' good nature, but the perception of their motto is to 'Divide and conquer'.

My fear is the new mine will pave the way for future mining projects on the YP. REX have stated that once Hillside gets up and running, they have another 50 potential targets on YP which they will start to aggressively look at. In addition, there are now 12 other exploration companies operating on YP. At least 3 of these companies have already announced promising copper discoveries on the YP. These companies only need to find a viable deposit, and they would build haul roads back to Hillside for processing. This is why the YP Landowners Group, of which I am an active member, must stop Hillside proceeding.

Since the YP Landowners Group formed about 18 months ago, with over 250 members from across the State (not just farmers), we have been actively opposing the Hillside Mine, in order to protect YP's prime agricultural land, tourism and it's rural communities, which is what YP is renowned for.

I never thought I would ever end up protesting or speaking on the steps of Parliament House. Well, now I've done both! Our group has held two protest rallies on the steps of Parliament, with the last one being a State-wide rally and march to 'Save our Food Bowl', which helped us gain much needed media coverage in Adelaide as well as overseas.

We have held many public meetings, met with every major political party, all relevant Ministers, Shadow Ministers, as well as our local MP and our Local Council.

We have even invited politicians and Ministers over to the YP and given them a tour of the mine site, only to be told that 'mining and farming can co-exist' or 'you won't be able to stop it'.

We have been fighting against, not just Rex Minerals, but EVERYBODY. There has been very little support from the Government, and initially, even our Local Council, whose Mayor and two councillors owned shares in Rex Minerals and failed to declare this conflict of interest.

Throughout the Hillside approvals process, we have been trying to put up as many obstacles in their path as possible, to slow them down. Time is death for exploration and mining companies.

When Rex Minerals first came to YP in late 2007, with exploration at Hillside starting in early 2008, we have had to live with the noise, lights and dust from up to seven drill rigs working 24/7, nearly every day of the year, right up until mid-2013. That's 5 ½ years!

It has been 7 months since REX announced their plans for a small-scale start up, and we still know NOTHING. The Government knows NOTHING. The public knows NOTHING.

Our lives are completely in limbo, and have been for the past 7 years. This is taking a personal toll on the whole family. The stress of not knowing what our future holds and being unable to plan for the short and long term improvements to our farm is difficult.

We have a succession plan in place because we want to pass on the farm to our children, as has been in the past. We are only caretakers of our land.

The extreme stress and pressure over the years has put a strain on our personal relationships. Our farming business and our quality family time has suffered immensely as a result.

But the emotional attachment runs much deeper than any practical obstacle to continued farming. You wake up in the morning, you don't leave the family home. The family comes with you and you do your job. It's our business, it's our play, and it's our recreation. It's the whole kit and caboodle.

Moving to another farm nearby is unthinkable, both because of the tradition and because of the extent of mining exploration licences granted over the YP. I fear no land will be exempt. Why should I shift and be badgered all around the countryside? There's nowhere to go, so I want to stay right here.

Agriculture and large-scale invasive mining (like Hillside) cannot co-exist, because mining destroys the very land we need to produce on. Would you prefer to eat food from a

'clean, green and biosecure' country like Australia, or from an overseas country and risk eating contaminated food, as we saw with the contaminated berries recently?

In the sitting rooms of Parliament House, embedded in the carpet, are images of wheat sheaves and grapes. This is a reminder that Parliament was established around Agriculture. I don't recall seeing any pick and shovels!

Agriculture is an infinite, renewable resource, but mining has an end point.

Ever since I was a little boy, all I wanted to do was be a farmer, like my Dad, and this still remains my passion today.

At least once in your life, you will need a doctor, a lawyer, a policeman and a preacher. But 3 times a day, every day, you need a farmer.

Thankyou for inviting me to speak tonight.