

GAS WATCH 219.

Barry O'Farrell's new "user pays" democracy.

In an extraordinary move, the man elected to represent the community has instead decided to take them on head first in the Supreme Court, and make them pay for trying to protect the health of themselves, their children and their environment.

Quite unbelievably, Barry O'Farrell has sent in Minister Brad Hazzard to fight on the side of the mines AGAINST the community. That's right, AGAINST the community which elected him.

In his fight against the residents of the Hunter village of Bulga, Premier Barry has asked Minister Brad to seek a Supreme Court costs order* against those good people.

The people of Bulga took on the mining giant Warkworth Mining (Rio Tinto) in the Land and Environment Court and won, protecting their village from imminent destruction by the dramatic increase in size of the nearby coal mine.

As instructed by Premier Barry, Minister Brad has filed an appeal in the Supreme Court, against the win by the residents of the village of Bulga, also seeking that the people of Bulga pay the costs of his appeal. It is the Minister's own appeal. The people of Bulga had no say in whether or not an appeal should be lodged by the Government against them. They had won their case to protect their village. But Brad has lodged his appeal and wants the people to pay for it out of their own pockets.

Minister Brad wants the mine to go ahead, even though the Land and Environment Court in a considered judgment said that, for many sound reasons, its expansion should not be approved.

It seems that Minister Brad Hazzard has no concern or compassion for the Bulga community. It seems that the fossil fuel industry is running this Government's agenda.

Shame on all members of this Government for treating the residents of Bulga with such contempt.

Premier Barry is sending a clear signal to those trying to protect their own children and the environment against potentially catastrophic health effects by making them pay.

It is also clear that if you want democratic representation under this Government, be prepared to pay a financial price for the privilege.



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*(Clause 38 of the Minister's submissions filed in the Supreme Court.)