

Clive Palmer has made a desperate attempt to claw back support for his proposed 'China First' coal mine in central-west Queensland after opposition to the project intensified in recent weeks.

However, his speech at a function in Yeppoon last night only served to further convince local people that he cannot be trusted with the region's environment.

Responding to a question about the impact his proposed mine would have on the Bimblebox Nature Refuge and the endangered Black-throated Finch, Palmer stated,

"Fortunately the Black-throated Finch has wings and can fly, but when you look at the nature reserve it was originally a farm and a pastoral area, which had 'devoided' all of the vegetation, the main trees and things like that.

"It was then donated as a nature reserve - the State Government independently assessed it and it was given the lowest classification of any environmental reserve in the state," Palmer asserted.

The entire extent of Bimblebox Nature Refuge's 8000 hectares would be impacted by both open cut and underground mining if Palmer's mine is given the go-ahead. Paola Cassoni, part-owner of the refuge was shocked to hear his comments.

"He has revealed an incredible ignorance about the environment and the impacts that would result from this development," she said.

"Over 95% of Bimblebox Nature Refuge is composed of remnant woodland. That means it has never been cleared. This place was saved from clearing when most properties around here were having their vegetation knocked down.

"It was also found to contain some of the richest plant diversity in the region because it has never been heavily grazed. Those are the very reasons this reserve was created.

"The conservation agreements we signed with both the state and federal governments are the highest form of protection available for private land in Queensland. Clive Palmer needs to check his facts.

The flock of Black-throated Finch on Bimblebox Nature Refuge were recently observed by a number of Birds Australia members.

"The sighting of Black-throated Finch on Bimblebox is remarkable," said Ms Cassoni.

"The last confirmed sighting of the species this far south was in Rockhampton in 2004.

"Even within the environmental impact assessment that Clive Palmer has paid for it is stated that there is far too little information available on the species to know what kind of impact the mine would have on them. There clearly needs to be a lot more work done."

Paola Cassoni is available for interview: 07 4985 3474