

Threat to nature refuge

Owner pleads with mining magnate

ALPHA: A Central Highlands nature refuge owner has been forced to plead with mining billionaire Clive Palmer about the future of her reserve after the Queensland Government granted the mining mogul full rights to explore the 8000-hectare sanctuary.

Bimblebox Nature Refuge owner Paola Cassoni has lost faith in the State and Federal governments' commitment to biodiversity, leaving her with no other option than to

appeal to the compassionate side of the Waratah Coal chairman.

In 2007 Mr Palmer's Waratah Coal was granted an exploration permit that covers all of Bimblebox Nature Refuge and so far the company has drilled 20 exploratory holes on the property.

In 2009 Mr Palmer received further permission from the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) to drill

another 100 holes.

Ms Cassoni said no prior consultation with Bimblebox was involved in the process.

"Of the 366 nature refuges in Queensland, half have mining exploration tenures over them," she said.

"Biodiversity has no price tag and is not replaceable, it is a must, especially in our region.

"All our guts and money went into this place."

"At the heart of all this is a blunt betrayal

from both the State Government within the Nature Refuge program and the Federal Government within the National Reserve System Strategy."

Earlier this month Six Degrees, a protest group linked to Friends of the Earth, took the plea directly to Mr Palmer's offices in Brisbane, setting up a nature refuge in the entrance hallways.

Mr Palmer declined to provide any comment on the day about the protest.



NO COMMENT: Clive Palmer's Waratah Coal has been granted full rights to explore Bimblebox Nature Reserve near Alpha.

PHOTO: ALAN PORRIT.