

## **What Lies Ahead at Bentley?**

**A Letter to the Editor from Dr Wayne Somerville – 22 April 2014**

The Bentley Protectors could soon confront a massive police operation. Abandoning reason and decency, the NSW Government appears locked into a high risk 'shock and awe' strategy. They hope that riot police can end our community's resistance to gas field industrialisation. But Minister Roberts' courageous policy of 'mining by martial law' can only succeed if we allow it to – and why would we do that?

'Shock and awe' only works if we are indeed shocked and awed. But what happens if we are just 'prepared and bored', and respond with humour and compassion rather than fear and anger?

Tactical and riot squad police are taught to neutralise resistance with overwhelming force. The gasfield bullies talk violence and they want us to confront the police head-on. In their dreams, we will be so decisively suppressed that we give up. But that is not going to happen. The people of the Northern Rivers are not going to cop shattered communities and ruined country.

Our brave Protectors and Simmos will delay the obscene parade. But armed riot police tend to get their portaloos and dongas in eventually. Playing to an opponent's strength is not good tactics. Unplanned defiance of the riot squad would result in mass arrests, bail conditions, and a consequent weakening of our people power. A judo attitude in which the opponent's force is sidestepped and deflected, rather than met head-on, Sumo-style, is needed.

The Bentley well is not the end of the campaign – it is just the next step along the road to victory. We will win but we need to be patient, persistent and resilient. Our task is not just to survive, but to thrive and grow stronger as we go on.

To succeed, the gas vandals have to build hundreds of wells and miles of pipes and roads under constant police protection. Time is on our side. We live here and we are not going away. The iconic Doubtful Creek photo of a single gravel truck being escorted by a ring of armed police still makes me smile – 'Mining the Metgasco Way: What a business plan!'. There will be many more such photo opportunities before this campaign runs its course.

So let's not follow their script. Remember who you are and why you are in this campaign. We are on the right side of history. When you see columns of police looking mean and nasty, remember the big picture, draw on the fellowship and support of the good people around you, find your humour and compassion, and savour the moment. You will be privileged to witness an event of historical importance. The riot police might win this skirmish, but our determined citizens will win the war.

How ironic it will be if the police assault takes place around ANZAC Day. The struggle to protect our democracy and precious country goes on. We will honour the ANZAC tradition by supporting our friends and persevering until the job is done.

Day by day our community grows stronger. We are learning about unity in diversity. Democracy will prevail. A great good is coming from all this effort.