



The Hon Brad Hazzard MP

Minister for Planning & Infrastructure

Minister assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW

MEDIA RELEASE

6 March 2012

PROTECTING OUR FARMLAND

High-quality agricultural land and its water sources will be safeguarded from mining and coal seam gas projects under landmark draft NSW Government plans launched today for public discussion.

Minister for Planning and Infrastructure Brad Hazzard today released a draft regional land-use policy and newly-mapped regional land-use plans for the Upper Hunter and New England North West regions, delivering on a major election promise.

“This is the first time in the State’s history that strategic agricultural land has been mapped, made available and given greater protection from mining proposals,” Mr Hazzard said.

The NSW Government also announced a raft of other measures, including:

- A draft aquifer interference policy which improves protection for the groundwater needed by farmers; and
- A new draft code of practice for the coal seam gas exploration industry released by Trade and Investment NSW.

“Today we’re announcing a draft proposal for the delivery of a strategic regional land-use policy to ensure **prime agricultural land** and **critical industry clusters** like the thoroughbred and wine industries are safeguarded,” Mr Hazzard said.

“We’re also giving improved certainty for the State’s important resources industry by establishing clear rules and a transparent assessment process.”

Major mining and coal seam gas production proposals on, or within 2km, of mapped strategic agricultural land will need to go through a stringent new ‘Gateway’ process. This will involve an independent scientific panel with the power to say “yes” or “no” as to whether the proposal can get to the development application stage.

Across both regions, about 1.35 million hectares of **high-quality agricultural land** has been identified, including the black soils of the Liverpool Plains, horse breeding industry near Scone and vineyards near Cessnock – all subject to the “Gateway”.

“We are delivering the best protection for agricultural land in Australia and extremely tough controls on coal seam gas mining,” Mr Hazzard said.

More information is available at www.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/regionallanduse

MEDIA: Mark Skelsey 0407 851 095