



MEDIA RELEASE

Deputy Premier & Minister leave mining affected NSW councils underwhelmed

The Deputy Premier, the Hon. Andrew Stoner and the Minister for Resources and Energy, the Hon. Anthony Roberts addressed the recent quarterly meeting of the Association of Mining Related Councils (AMRC) in Sydney. Key issues covered in the meeting were Resources for Regions, Coal Seam Gas (CSG) and Voluntary Planning Agreements (VPAs).

“We appreciated that Mr Stoner and Mr Roberts took time out of parliament to attend our meeting. With 23 member councils, the AMRC is the peak representative body for mining affected councils in NSW and it is appropriate that we have an open dialogue with relevant Ministers,” Association Chair, Cr. Col Mitchell (of Wollondilly Shire) said.

The AMRC has long sought a Royalties for Regions scheme, where a percentage of mining royalties which go into State Government coffers, go back to regional LGA's to assist with mining impacts.

The Resources for Regions program involves a select number of councils being listed as eligible for a funding round. Those councils must then prepare and submit infrastructure funding applications to a panel. The ever-changing criteria have been a major area of concern for AMRC members, such as Gunnedah Shire. Cr. Mitchell said the program's criteria must now consider mining affected councils, impacted by a mine in an adjacent LGA.

“As few as eight councils made the Resources for Regions eligibility list in the last round. Now, we are concerned that Government agencies are putting in bids for this money. We're not happy about that at all,” he said.

Mr Stoner assured the Association of the independence of the Resources for Regions process, adding that the Government is listening and improving the program. He said new criteria will be announced shortly.

The meeting also saw Association members call for a structured process for VPAs; these can entail negotiation between a new or expanding mining operation and can include infrastructure spending by the mining before progressing. An agreement can see a mining company fund a road or water supply but they are voluntary and with no blueprint or structure to the process, councils can find it daunting, inconsistent and flawed “A Planning Officer with one of our member councils is going through all of the VPAs in NSW, over many years. He is seeing if a set of rules or guidelines can be developed,” Cr. Mitchell said.

Council delegates put a number of questions to the Ministers, including some concerning CSG and the need for an independent authority, such as an ombudsman.

Cr. Chris Connor is the AMRC Deputy Chair (and Deputy Lord Mayor of Wollongong City Council). “In respect to CSG exploration and mining, the Association of Mining Related Councils NSW has taken a policy position, which will be taken back to our communities. There are countless voices, from mining companies to environmental lobbyists, that all say they are right. We need to provide our communities with real understanding about CSG. Greater clarity on the issue would result from the release of the State's Chief Scientist, Prof. Mary O'Kane's final report, plus further independent research on the affects of CSG mining on the environment, looking at chemicals used, fracking, emissions, salinity, aquifers and general water impacts,” he said.

“What is the role of local government in the pre-gateway determination of lodged applications for Coal Seam Gas exploration and mining? That is a grey area at the moment. Councils do not know where they stand and as an Association representing them, we want more clarity from the NSW Government, particularly Planning NSW Minister, the Hon. Brad Hazard.”

“NSW needs to secure good gas supplies; it is an economic priority. The Santos Narrabri Gas Project could meet up to 50 percent of the State's natural gas needs and yield up to \$1.6 billion in mining royalties for the NSW

For further information, contact AMRC Executive Officer, Don Tydd: 02 6775 3844 or 0418 681 320.

Association of Mining Related Councils Inc.



Government. Yet, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) recently signed by Santos and the Deputy Premier, regarding this Project is concerning; we want details about what it means to the due processes.”

Cr Connor summed up how the Association felt about the Premier’s and Minister’s words on funding for mining related councils in recent years. “We were underwhelmed. Mining creates over a billion dollars in mining royalties every year. The NSW Government has offered back to local regions \$100mil. over four years. Local Government and Mining sector sustainability would be better off if we got our fair share.”

Caption:

[AMRC_Feb.2014_1454]

Association of Mining Related Councils Deputy Chair, Cr. Chris Connor, CEO Don Tydd, Deputy Premier, the Hon. Andrew Stoner and AMRC Chair, Cr. Col Mitchell at the recent meeting.

Member Councils listed below. For further information on the AMRC, please go to: <http://www.miningrelatedcouncils.asn.au/>.



Members



Bland Shire Council
blandshire.nsw.gov.au



Blayney Shire Council
blayney.local-e.nsw.gov.au



Broken Hill City Council
brokenhill.nsw.gov.au



Cabonne Shire Council
cabonne.nsw.gov.au



Campbelltown City Council
campbelltown.nsw.gov.au



Cessnock City Council
cessnock.nsw.gov.au



Cobar Shire Council
cobar.nsw.gov.au



Gloucester Shire Council
gloucester.nsw.gov.au



Gunnedah Shire Council
infogunnedah.com.au



Lachlan Shire Council
lachlan.nsw.gov.au



Lithgow City Council
council.lithgow.com



Liverpool Plains Shire Council
lpsc.nsw.gov.au/

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Mid-Western Regional
Council
midwestern.nsw.gov.au



Narrabri Shire Council
narrabri.local-e.nsw.gov.au



Narromine Shire Council
narromine.nsw.gov.au



Newcastle City Council
ncc.nsw.gov.au



Orange City Council
orange.nsw.gov.au



Parkes Shire Council
parkes.nsw.gov.au



Singleton Shire Council
singleton.nsw.gov.au



Upper Hunter Shire Council
upperhunter.local-e.nsw.gov.au



Warrumbungle Shire Council
warrumbungle.nsw.gov.au



Wollondilly Shire Council
wollondilly.nsw.gov.au



Wollongong City Council
wollongong.nsw.gov.au