MEDIA RELEASE

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The Hon Brad Hazzard MP
Minister for Planning & Infrastructure
Minister assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW

NSW Government adopts rigorous strategic approach to regional land use planning

The NSW Government has today released details of transitional arrangements which will allow for the staged implementation of the Strategic Regional Land Use Policy.

Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Brad Hazzard, said, “Prior to the election, the NSW Coalition announced that it would introduce a Strategic Regional Land Use Policy to strike the right balance between our important agricultural, mining and energy sectors, while ensuring the protection of high value conservation lands. We are now delivering on that commitment.

“The policy includes a number of immediate and longer term measures designed to address issues occurring now, as well as providing better certainty to our communities and industry about how our regions will change over time.

“The transitional arrangements we are announcing today represent the starting point for those reforms, and put in place a number of interim measures while we engage with key stakeholders”, Mr Hazzard said.

The transitional measures in the Policy include:

- An immediate 60 day moratorium on the granting of new coal, coal seam gas, and petroleum exploration licences in NSW;

- A requirement that all applications for coal, coal seam gas, and petroleum exploration licences be exhibited for public comment – a new benchmark in transparency;

- The public notification of Guidelines which will inform the assessment of impacts on strategic agricultural land from proposed development activities;

- A requirement that all new coal, coal seam gas, and petroleum extraction applications must be accompanied by an Agricultural Impact Statement;

- The exhibition of an Aquifer Interference Regulation for public comment – which once implemented, will introduce a suite of new measures to better regulate activities that impact on aquifers; and

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• A stakeholder reference group consisting of the key agricultural, industrial and conservation groups will be established to advise on the policy’s development and implementation.

Mr Hazzard said that the transitional measures were a first step in providing a comprehensive framework for the management of competing land uses across regional areas of NSW.

“We want to ensure that these arrangements deliver on our commitments in relation to strategic land use, and balance the need for investment certainty with conservation of high value strategic agricultural land.”

Mr Hazzard said the Government’s approach will be based on Regional Strategic Plans that will introduce a tailored approach to the specific needs, challenges and opportunities of each region.

“Regional Strategic Plans will ensure a balanced and sustainable management of competing land uses in each region rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all approach to land use planning. These plans will provide local communities with far greater certainty about how their areas will change over time.”

Mr Hazzard said that the preparation of these plans (for all strategically important regions) will begin within twelve months.