



The Hon Brad Hazzard MP

Minister for Planning & Infrastructure

Minister assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW

MEDIA RELEASE

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HAVE YOUR SAY ON STRATEGIC LANDS POLICY

The NSW Government today confirmed that public consultation will be front and centre over the next two months in the development of the Upper Hunter and New England North West draft strategic regional land-use plans.

“We will be going out into these two regions to get on-the-ground feedback to these historic draft plans,” Minister for Planning and Infrastructure Brad Hazzard said.

Mr Hazzard said an online forum will begin tomorrow and confirmed that public forums will be held at Gunnedah on 20 March and Singleton on 13 April – with more details at www.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/regionallanduse

“We are keen to get public input into these plans but it is important that this feedback is assisted by public commentary which is informed and accurate,” he said.

“For instance, the NSW Farmers Association has made a number of incorrect assertions. Below is a response to these assertions.”

NSW Farmers assertions	The facts
“The NSW Government has broken one of its key election promises to protect parts of NSW from mining and coal seam gas”	The government is delivering on its election commitment and through a scientific arms-length assessment process, will protect high-quality agricultural land from mining and coal seam gas development for the first time in the State’s 224-year history.
The draft Policy “Could allow invasive activities such as fracking and test pilot production to continue on strategic agricultural land without the need for an aquifer interference approval”	The government has a moratorium on fracking pending the completion of a review by the NSW Chief Scientist into fracking processes and well design. Further, the aquifer interference policy requires any activity, including CSG exploration, that involves the extraction of more than three megalitres of water to obtain a water licence.
“The government will allow hundreds of current exploration and mining licences to continue business as usual, as the new policy will be limited to future applications only”	Any State significant development application for mining or coal seam gas on strategic agricultural land will be subject to the upfront ‘Gateway’ assessment process, once the relevant plan is finalised. This will occur whether or not exploration licences were issued prior to the introduction of this policy.

“The fact is the NSW Government’s draft policy delivers the most significant protections for strategic agricultural land in the State’s history,” Mr Hazzard said.

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