MORE PROTECTION FOR AGRICULTURAL LAND

Stringent new laws to protect valuable agricultural land are being placed on exhibition by the NSW Government.

“These steps were outlined in September as part of the Government’s Strategic Regional Land Use Policy governing mining and Coal Seam Gas (CSG) projects on valuable agricultural land,” Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services Andrew Stoner said today.

“The policy includes a new independent, upfront and scientific assessment of these projects through a Gateway process, before a development application can be lodged.

“Today an amendment to the Mining State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) is being publicly exhibited, while applications are also being invited for membership on the independent Gateway Panel.

“Members of the Gateway Panel will need to have expertise in the fields of agricultural science, hydrogeology, mining or petroleum development.

“A pool of independent experts will be established from which the panel can be drawn.

The Gateway Panel will consist of a maximum of three members at any time.

“This would ensure the best and most relevant expertise could be brought to bear on the specific issues relating to each particular project and each parcel of land,” Mr Stoner said.

“The SEPP will include detailed maps of land identified as ‘Strategic Agricultural Land’ and will outline the types of development that will be subject to the Gateway process.

Other changes include an amendment to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000 is required to fully implement the Gateway process and is also being exhibited.

The draft amendment to the Mining SEPP will be on exhibition for public feedback until Friday 14 December 2012.

A draft cost benefit analysis methodology for mining and CSG proposals, prepared by NSW Treasury, is also being exhibited. The exhibition documents can be found at www.planning.nsw.gov/onenxhibition

Media: Office of the Deputy Premier 9228 5209