

Media release



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Independent panel on mining in Sydney's drinking water catchment

World leading experts in mining and water will be part of a new Independent Expert Panel on Mining in Sydney's Drinking Water Catchment.

Marcus Ray, Deputy Secretary of Planning Services at the Department of Planning and Environment, said that protecting our water resources is always a top priority for the NSW Government.

"The independent panel will provide advice to the NSW Government on mining operations in the 'Special Areas' of the catchment, which refers to the protected areas around Sydney's major water storages such as the Avon, Cordeaux, Cataract and Woronora dams," Mr Ray said.

"While coal mining has occurred in the catchment for over 160 years without any major impacts on water supply, the expert panel will look closely at any risks to the catchment's water resources.

"To ensure best practice mining, the NSW Government is establishing the panel to advise on ways to best respond to recommendations made in recent studies.

"All mines in the catchment are currently required to limit water losses and follow strict water monitoring conditions.

"The expert panel will review water modelling and monitoring activities of approved mines in the Special Areas, to ensure they are as accurate as possible.

"A highly regarded mining study from 2008, known as the Southern Coalfield Inquiry, will also be updated by the expert panellists, who will apply the latest scientific knowledge to mining operations in the catchment."

Mines located in the catchment are substantial contributors to the Illawarra region and employ 700 people. They supply coal to the nearby BlueScope Steelworks in Wollongong, which employs another 3,000 people.

There are three underground coal mines in the Special Areas of Sydney's water catchment including the Dendrobium, Metropolitan and Wongawilli mines.

The new NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer will chair the independent panel when appointed, in the interim Emeritus Professor Jim Galvin will act as the Chair.

Mr Ray added that five other carefully selected eminent experts will make up the panel and provide the best scientific advice available in Australia.

“Emeritus Professor Jim Galvin and Professor Bruce Hebblewhite have internationally renowned expertise on underground mining and subsidence,” Mr Ray said.

“Professor Neil McIntyre is known for his world-leading hydrology experience with land use and mining impacts.

“Dr Ann Young is the foremost expert in swamps in this particular region and has published several academic books on environmental science.

“Michael Williams is the former Principal Hydrogeologist for the NSW Office of Water and brings 40 years’ experience serving the public sector in water management.”

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Biographies of panellists:

Emeritus Professor Jim Galvin (Interim Chair)

Emeritus Professor (University of New South Wales) in Mining Engineering and former Member of the NSW Planning Assessment Commission (PAC), Professor Galvin is one of the world’s foremost experts on underground mining and subsidence. Professor Galvin was a member of the independent Panel for the Southern Coalfield Inquiry (2008) and several subsequent PAC reviews of mining projects in the Southern Coalfield. He was previously the Chair of the Victorian Government Technical Review Board for underground mining and the Chair of the Coal Innovation NSW Ministerial Advisory Council. He also provided peer review advice on the Dendrobium Height of Cracking Study.

Professor Bruce Hebblewhite

Professor of Mining Engineering at the School of Mining Engineering, University of New South Wales, Professor Hebblewhite specialises in mining geomechanics, underground mine design and planning, mine safety and risk management and has over forty years’ international mining industry experience. He was the Chair of the independent Panel for the Southern Coalfield Inquiry (2008) and is currently providing independent advice to the Department of Planning and Environment on both the Dendrobium and the Metropolitan coal mines.

Dr Ann Young

Dr Young has a PhD in Upland Swamps on the Woronora Plateau and was previously a lecturer at the University of Wollongong's School of Earth and Environmental Sciences. Dr Young is the author of several academic books on environmental science, including *Upland Swamps in the Sydney Region* published in 2017. Over the last decade, she has made submissions to the NSW Government on the environmental assessment of underground coal mining and was a member of Community Consultative Committees at the Dendrobium and Russell Vale mines.

Professor Neil McIntyre

Professor of Regional Water and Land Resources at The University of Queensland, Professor McIntyre holds an MSc and PhD from Imperial College London. He has world-leading experience in impacts of land use and climate change on water yields, particularly in relation to mining. His roles have included serving on the British Hydrological Society committee, the Institution of Civil Engineer's Water Expert Panel and the Steering Committee of the Commonwealth Leading Practice Sustainable Development Program.

Mr Michael Williams

Former Principal Hydrogeologist for the NSW Office of Water and recipient of the Public Service Medal, Mr Williams has 40 years of experience in the NSW public sector and is one of the most distinguished groundwater practitioners in Australia. Mr Williams has lectured at the Australian Groundwater School for over 20 years and is currently providing independent advice to the NSW Government on the Narrabri Gas Project.

The Terms of Reference for the independent panel are available on the Office of Chief Scientist and Engineer's website

www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/reports/independent-expert-panel-for-mining-in-the-catchment

To read the recent audit of the Sydney Water Catchment and its recommendations, visit the NSW Parliament website

www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/tables/papers/Pages/tables-paper-details.aspx?pk=71475

To read the recommendations from an independent expert report into rock strata near Dendrobium Coal Mine, commissioned by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, visit the Department's website

http://planspolicies.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=7441