

Putty Community Association Inc CSG Subcommittee

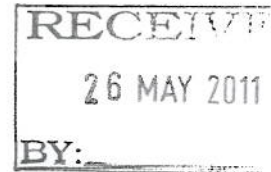
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24th May 2010

The Hon. Barry O'Farrell MP,
Level 40, Governor Macquarie Tower,
1 Farrer Place,
Sydney NSW 2000

COPY



Dear Premier,

As you are aware, mining and extractive industries are causing increasing community concern in NSW.

One community that has recently joined this groundswell of anxiety is in the Putty Valley, a small agricultural community, surrounded by the Yengo and Wollemi National Parks.

Regrettably, despite Government requirements to the contrary, the community became aware of current exploration activity in the Valley by Dart Energy purely by accident. Since then, despite a public meeting, the company has done little to assuage this community concern.

Indeed, the level of community concern resulted in a Special General Meeting of Putty Community Association Inc on 30th April 2011. At this meeting the following motion was passed unanimously:

“That the Putty Community Association Inc form a sub-committee to assist the community with information relating to coal seam gas exploration and/or extraction and act as a vehicle for the Putty Community and wider community to be pro-active in measures to prevent the potential environmental and economic degradation of the Putty Valley and surrounding areas.”

It was therefore with some interest that community members read the recent media release by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. (Copy attached)

The purpose of this correspondence is to advise the Government of the determination of the Putty Community to protect the Valley from any negative impacts of exploration and extraction and to seek urgent clarification regarding a number of statements made in Minister Hazzard's media release:

- 1.) The Release states: “The NSW Government has today released details of transitional arrangements which will allow for the staged implementation of the Strategic Regional Land Use Policy.”

The Community requests a copy of those details to better understand the Government's intentions regarding the transitional arrangements. Advice should be sent to the above address for distribution to community members.

- 2.) Minister Hazzard is also quoted as saying, “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.

Could you please provide detail as to how the Government defines 'balance' in this context?

The Community is also extremely keen to participate in the development of any Strategic Regional Landuse Policy and seeks advice as to what mechanisms are contemplated to develop such a policy.

- 3.) Minister Hazzard goes on to say: "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.

As point 2 would seem to imply that Strategic Regional Landuse Policies are yet to be formulated, we are concerned to be advised of "the immediate and longer term measures" and how they will provide "better certainty" for the Putty Community.

- 4.) The Release then says: "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.

We seek advice as to what the interim measures are and how the Government defines key stakeholders and how they will engage with those stakeholders.

- 5.) The Release then says that "The transitional measures in the Policy include:
 - A.) An immediate 60 day moratorium on the granting of new coal, coal seam gas, and petroleum exploration licences in NSW;"

Could you please advise what the benefit of this moratorium is, to whom and how a duration of 60 days was determined?

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

Could you please advise whether companies will be obliged to specifically address issues raised by the public? How will company actions be measured and assessed and by whom? What right of reply will communities have?

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

Will communities be contributing to the development of the "Guidelines"? Who will undertake the assessments of impacts and how will corrective strategies be implemented and monitored?

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

The Community seeks further detail as to what information will be required in an Agricultural Impact Statement and how this information will be used.

- E.) "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;"

This point seems to imply that an "Aquifer Interference Regulation" is already in existence. Please advise when and where the exhibition will occur.

F.) "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."

Could you please clarify whether this point refers to the "Strategic Regional Landuse Policy referred to in Point 2? If so, are we correct to assume that there will be (as implied later in the Release) a series of policies, each tailored to a particular region? If regional policies are to be developed, we seek advice as to the names and geographic definition of each region.

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

Could you please indicate how this timeframe interacts with the Government's Moratorium and what the actual completion date will be?

Please also advise the criteria the Government will use to identify "strategically important regions"

The Putty Community welcomes the Government's announcements and acknowledges "the transitional measures (are) a first step in providing a comprehensive framework for the management of competing land uses across regional areas of NSW."

We look forward to receiving your clarifications on the matters raised in this correspondence and working with the Government in a constructive and collaborative way to ensure that robust and effective outcomes are delivered for the local community as well as the wider State.

Yours sincerely

Kathy McKenzie
Chairperson
Putty Community Association Inc CSG Subcommittee

CC: Martin Ferguson, Tony Kelly, Jeremy Buckingham, Kate Faehrmann, Dr John Kaye, Bill Heffernan, Robert Oakeshott, Tony Windsor, Dr Nikki Williams, Sue Moore - Singleton Council, Bart Bassett - Hawkesbury Council, Lock the Gate Alliance, Sydney Morning Herald, Singleton Argus, Hawkesbury Gazette, ABC Musselbrook



The Hon Brad Hazzard MP

Minister for Planning & Infrastructure

Minister assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW

MEDIA RELEASE

Strict Embargo – 1am, Saturday May 21, 2011

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

MEDIA: Clementine Johnson 9228 5258 / 0467 740 915

- 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.