



The Hon Andrew Stoner MP
Deputy Premier of NSW
Minister for Trade and Investment
Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW LAND & WATER COMMISSIONER, END TO ROYALTY HOLIDAY, AND COAL SEAM GAS FUNDS TO BENEFIT LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The NSW Government will appoint a new Land and Water Commissioner, end the royalty holiday for coal seam gas producers, and encourage producers to contribute funds to local projects under a new community benefits initiative, Deputy Premier and Nationals Leader Andrew Stoner announced today.

Mr Stoner made the announcement at the NSW Nationals' Conference in the Southern Highlands.

"The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will **appoint a new Land and Water Commissioner** to oversee the regulation of invasive exploration activity on Strategic Regional Land before this activity occurs," Mr Stoner said.

"This will strengthen the position of affected land owners.

"**Standardised land access agreements** for coal seam gas exploration on private land will be introduced to deliver greater consistency and fairness for landholders.

"A standardised agreement will be developed by a working group made up of NSW Farmers, irrigators, cotton growers, and the coal seam gas industry, and the application of these agreements will be overseen by the new Land and Water Commissioner."

The Land and Water Commissioner will report to the Director General of the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services. The role will complement the Federal Government's newly established interim Independent Expert Scientific Committee.

"The NSW Government will **establish new Regional Community Funds**, which will see local communities receive a share of their region's assets," Mr Stoner said.

"Given the resource is owned by the public, it's important that local communities and the people of NSW benefit from the production of coal seam gas through royalties and investment in communities in which the industry operates.

"It is imperative that coal seam gas producers invest in the communities in which they operate.

"Under the proposed framework, coal seam gas producers may elect to contribute funding into a Regional Community Fund. The NSW Government will refund \$1 for every \$2 committed by industry, up to 10 per cent of the royalty take.

“Regional Community Funds will provide much-needed funding for projects such as critical infrastructure or human services, with funding to be determined according to community needs in consultation with the industry and the community.

“This is an initiative that seeks to directly benefit communities in resource areas in recognition of the financial benefits that must be shared between the coal seam gas industry and the community.

“The NSW Government contribution will be funded by **ending the royalty holiday** for Coal Seam Gas producers.”

Mr Stoner said the NSW Government will seek industry and community feedback within 21 days regarding the establishment of the Regional Community Funds.

“The NSW Government is seeking enhanced industry co-operation to ensure resource communities adequately share in the economic and social benefits of developing the coal seam gas industry,” Mr Stoner said.

“We acknowledge the many responses to the draft Strategic Regional Land Use policy and will continue to refine the policy over the next few months to ensure NSW has the strongest regulation of mining and gas extraction in Australia, if not the world.”