



# The Hon Anthony Roberts MP

Minister for Resources and Energy  
Special Minister of State

## Tim Owen AM MP

Member for Newcastle

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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#### NSW GOVERNMENT WELCOMES HOME THE WATSONS

Minister for Resources and Energy Anthony Roberts and Member for Newcastle Tim Owen have welcomed an elderly couple's return to their Newcastle home after repairs to fix major issues due to water seepage.

For 32 years Allen and Claris Watson, both aged in their 90's, have battled water seepage and sludge issues on their Waratah property.

Mr Roberts said it is believed the water seepage was caused by a number of factors, including a nearby derelict mine which ceased operating in the 1930's.

"I am so pleased that Mr and Mrs Watson are free of the water problems that have plagued their property for more than three decades," Mr Roberts said.

In August last year the NSW Division of Resources and Energy commissioned Geotechnical Engineering Professor Stephen Fityus from the University of Newcastle to undertake an urgent independent review of the area to identify possible causes and the extent of water seepage.

Mr Roberts said Professor Fityus concluded that "a mining effect" at the Watson's house was "not only plausible, but likely".

"On that basis and consistent with the *Derelict Mines Program: Funding Priority Guidelines*, it was recommended that work should be undertaken to remediate the water seepage," he said.

"Derelict Mines Program funds of \$285,000 were used for the remediation work.

"This included removing a shed and room at the back of the house to allow 60 centimetres of soil to be excavated and for a drainage blanket to be installed across the yard.

"A series of drainage channels to divert the water from the property were also built," he said.

The remediation work has also helped the drainage of shallow water seepage from the rear yards of neighbouring properties.

Mr Owen, who has consistently highlighted the plight of the Watsons, said work commenced three months ago to remediate the excessive water seepage at the property.

“The Watsons are mobility restricted and under considerable hardship,” Mr Owen said.

“Wet pathways from water seepage could increase the likelihood of a slip, trip or fall and were a health hazard.

“The previous Labor Government took the Watsons and people of Newcastle for granted.

“In its final year in power Labor investigated the issue and found the cost of further investigations or works was the responsibility of the homeowner and left the Watson’s in a dangerous situation.

“I am extremely pleased that we have been able to remedy the problem and Mr and Mrs Watson now have what they should have had decades ago – a liveable family home,” he said.