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MEDIA RELEASE

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CSG REFORM SAFEGUARDS HOMES AND AGRICULTURAL LANDS

The NSW Government has finalised landmark coal seam gas (CSG) reforms which see safeguards in place for approximately 5.3 million hectares of the State's homes and high quality farmland.

Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner, Minister for Planning and Infrastructure Brad Hazzard and Minister for Resources and Energy Anthony Roberts made the announcement today, saying the reforms struck the right balance for communities and industry.

"Today marks a significant milestone in this Government's commitment to balance the energy needs of the State and the need to support our vital agricultural industry," Mr Stoner said.

"Coal seam gas exclusion zones are now in force for an estimated 95 per cent of dwellings covered by current petroleum licences and tough regulations are also now in place for NSW's most valuable agricultural land.

"We've consulted with the community to identify millions of hectares of biophysical strategic agricultural land and critical industry clusters (CIC) and today we have acted to ensure that this important land is formally recognised and safeguarded.

"The NSW Government has delivered the strictest regulations around CSG activity in the country, which is a far cry from Labor who permitted CSG activity in residential areas and gave no special consideration to the impact of mining or CSG on the State's most valuable agricultural resources.

These reforms get the balance right by:

- **Applying coal seam gas exclusion zones** across the State to cover Critical Industry Clusters, residential zones, an additional seven rural villages and future growth areas in 55 council areas. CSG exclusion zones now apply to 2.7 million hectares in NSW. Some land that is in a CSG exclusion zone will also be subject to the Gateway process for other state significant mining activities.
- **Safeguarding approximately 2.8 million hectares** of the State's most valuable farming land by ensuring that the impacts on land and water or resource proposals are considered up front through the independent scientific Gateway process. These safeguards, introduced by the Liberal & Nationals Government, initially applied in the

Upper Hunter and New England North West regions (October 2013) and have now been extended statewide.

- **Implementing Critical Industry Clusters** for 60,000 hectares of viticulture land and 254,000 hectares of equine land in the Upper Hunter. (As some land overlaps in the clusters, the total area safeguarded is 288,000 hectares). No new CSG activity is allowed in any Critical Industry Cluster. Mining proposals in Critical Industry Clusters must go through the independent assessment of the Gateway process.

Minister for Planning and Infrastructure Brad Hazzard said the NSW Government implemented the first stage of reforms in October last year, including:

- Establishing CSG exclusion zones with a two kilometre buffer across existing residential zones and the North West and South West Growth Centres of Sydney, where new CSG activity is prohibited;
- Safeguarding approximately 1.74 million hectares of strategic agricultural land in the Upper Hunter and New England North West regions through the Gateway process; and
- Appointing the Gateway Panel to provide an independent, scientific assessment of major resources projects on strategic agricultural land.

Mr Hazzard said the final reforms announced today were publically exhibited in October and November last year.

As a result of submissions, an additional five future growth residential areas were added in the Gosford and Great Lakes council areas.

Nominations by landowners to be included or excluded from the Critical Industry Clusters were assessed by the Department of Trade and Investment, resulting in an increase of about 22,000 hectares within the horse-breeding cluster and a minor reduction of about 3,000 hectares in the wine cluster.

The Department of Primary Industries will contact the equine and viticulture groups and individuals about their nominations.

“We worked with the community to achieve these important reforms, which gets the balance right for the people of NSW,” Mr Hazzard said.

“Industry can plan ahead with certainty, the rules are clear, and communities can rest easy in the knowledge that NSW has the toughest CSG controls in the country.”

Minister for Resources and Energy Anthony Roberts said the reforms would ensure agriculture, sustainable resource development and communities could co-exist.

“These comprehensive reforms provide clarity, consistency and confidence for the community and a variety of industries across NSW,” Mr Roberts said.

Further information is at: www.planning.nsw.gov.au/srlup

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