

GAS WATCH 226.

The “Size of the Prize” to become the paramount consideration for mining approvals.

This week THE NSW government will implement controversial amendments to planning laws to prioritise economic considerations above all social and environmental factors when considering mining and CSG projects.

The Resource Significance SEPP, about to be gazetted, has been rejected out of hand by everyone either involved in agriculture or who cares for our environment, and should be rejected out of hand by anybody who wants to have a secure Australian food supply in the future.

“The changes outline key factors that decision makers must consider when **establishing the significance of the mineral resource** – namely the benefits that will flow to the economy via local job creation, regional expenditure and State royalties,” Minister Hartcher said.

This is an absolute disgrace. It encourages big mining companies to open cut good agricultural land, without community support; without reference to existing agricultural industries, including wine tourism; without reference to environmental or social considerations; without consideration to existing businesses; without considering basic cost benefit analyses.

Minister Hartcher is ignoring the triple bottom line framework (environmental, social and economic) simply to make it easier for the miners to look after their own share prices, to the detriment of the community.

Whilst the World Bank has decided not to lend for coal mine projects because of carbon pollution risks, the O’Farrell Government is reverting to a 1960’s model where short term economic expediency is the goal, to the detriment of our food bowls.

It is not appropriate to place the “economic value” of mineral resources on a pedestal above environmental and social values.

Surely the significant economic value of water resources and good agricultural land warrant just as much, if not more, consideration than the size of the prize.

Agriculture is also a major employer and generates significant economic activity whilst also contributing greatly to the social fabric of the State. It does not have the luxury of a “head start” over other industries or land uses, which head start Minister Hartcher is now handing to the mining industries on a silver plate.



www.huntenvalleyprotectionalliance.com

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