

## **Baird Government response to NSW Minerals Council pre-election submission**

The Baird Government re-affirms its commitment to the NSW mining sector. The mining sector is one of the foundations of our state. It directly employs over 33,000 people and over 130,000 indirectly. It generates over \$1.3 billion annually in royalties that build our roads, schools and hospitals.

This Government is committed to a strong, robust and transparent mining sector in NSW.

### **FIX THE PLANNING SYSTEM, TO PROTECT AND CREATE JOBS**

The Baird Government supports a transparent and robust framework that encourages growth in the exploration and mining sector. The regulatory frameworks we inherited were inadequate. Openness and transparency needed to be brought back.

We are unapologetically committed to maintaining our high environmental and social standards and a robust assessment framework. However, these assessments should not be carried out at the expense of an efficient process with certainty for investors.

This is why we have committed to halving the assessment timeframes for major mining projects.

A number of initiatives to achieve this have already been undertaken, including the issuing of directions to the PAC guiding the consideration of Government policy and providing clearer timeframes to be adhered to. DPC case managers are also being appointed for major projects to guide applicants through the government processes.

### **BETTER INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR MINING COMMUNITIES**

The Resources for Regions Program, which is administered by Infrastructure NSW, has seen the direct injection of funds into regional communities.

We made an election commitment in 2011 to allocate at least \$160 million over four years from Restart NSW to the Resources for Regions program to support communities experiencing unique pressures on their infrastructure and services due to mining.

The Baird Government exceeded this commitment, having committed a total of \$217 million to mining affected communities through the Resources for Regions program over four years from 2011-12 to 2014-15.

A re-elected Baird Government will extend the Resources for Regions program for a further four years. 10% of the regional component of Restart NSW will be reserved for Resources for Regions projects.

We will also extend the eligibility for this program to any LGA that can demonstrate that it is mining-affected.

### **BETTER POLICIES TO SUPPORT EXPLORATION**

Mineral exploration plays a crucial role in sustaining the mining sector into the future. My Government is committed to a sustainable exploration industry in NSW with a clear and consistent framework for it to operate within.

The New Frontiers Co-Operative Drilling Program has committed \$2 million to operators with their exploration programs, funding half of direct drilling costs, capped at \$200,000.

A \$5.9 million expansion of the Londonderry Drill core library has also recently been completed, providing increased capacity for its drillcore sample archiving and reference facility, which is heavily utilised by the exploration industry.

The strategic release framework for coal exploration is also nearing completion with the Coal Exploration Steering Group and its independent chair, Mr Percy Allan AM having finalised their recommendations. These recommendations are being reviewed and considered by the Government.

Last year the Government also commissioned Mr Bret Walker SC to examine the Land access arbitration framework. His subsequent report provided 32 recommendations to improve the current framework. We have committed to implementing all recommendations contained within the report.

### **STRONGER PROTECTION FROM ILLEGAL ACCESS SAFETY RISKS**

Mining has been a major contributor to NSW for a long time and it enjoys strong support from the community.

There are those however who don't share this support for the industry and exercise their right to voice this opinion.

The Baird Government respects the right of those who wish to engage in peaceful, lawful protests.

However the repeated flouting of the law by protesters who engage in illegal, dangerous activities on mine sites and escape serious penalty is unacceptable.

The law currently places responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of those who trespass on mine sites on the owners and operators and this must also be fixed.

Industry should not be responsible for the actions of protesters who set out to vandalise their property and delay their operations.

That is why we have committed to introducing new legislation into the parliament, should we be returned to Government, to fix these issues.

This will be done through reforms to Work, Health and Safety legislation, as well as other relevant acts.

### **BEST PRACTICE SERVICE DELIVERY, REGULATION AND TAXATION**

The Baird Government is committed to a strong mining sector in this state and to ensure that we need a clear, consistent and transparent framework for it to operate within.

We are committed to a best practice framework and we will continue to work towards achieving this.

We remain committed to our high environmental and social standards and delivering a more robust, transparent assessment framework. However this must be and will be in conjunction with accountability for making decisions within clear timeframes, and greater accountability right across the public sector.

We are also committed to maintaining a strong, continuous dialogue with all stakeholders. I intend to continue my quarterly meetings with industry representatives to ensure an open dialogue is maintained.

Consultation is the key to good policy and the Government is committed to consultation with all relevant stakeholders on proposed policy changes.

### **IMPLEMENT THE NSW MINERALS INDUSTRY ACTION PLAN**

The final Minerals Industry Action Plan has been submitted to Government by the NSW Minerals Industry Taskforce and we are currently reviewing its recommendations. It is pieces of work like the Minerals Industry Action Plan that will help guide a best practice framework for the mining sector, having provided clear recommendations on areas including planning processes, royalties and improved community consultation.

The Government will respond to all recommendations put forward in the plan.