



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## Media Release

5 March 2010

# Mining exploration access success for farmers needs to be built on

News today that the NSW Supreme Court has found in favour of the two farming families from the Liverpool Plains fighting BHP Billiton's access to their farms to conduct exploration drilling for coal has been welcomed by the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor.

Mr Windsor said that the decision is seen by those affected by the previous Chief Mining Warden's judgement as a victory for landholders over the way mining companies are granted access to private land in NSW to explore for minerals and needs to be built on.

"Congratulations to the Alcorn and Brown Families with the support of the Australian Farmers' Fighting Fund for standing their ground in the face of the giant mining company BHP Billiton.

"The stand has been seen as a test case that has gained the support of not only the Liverpool Plains farming community through the Caroon Coal Action Group, but more broadly by the farm sector worried about the impacts of mining exploration on prime agricultural land and its water resources.

"The decision by the NSW Supreme Court should now bring together the NSW Government, the mining industry and farming interests around the table to look at how all sectors can co-exist equitably rather than one sector overriding the other without due respect for its impact on the economic, environmental and social fabric of a region," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor is now calling on the Government and Opposition to accept his proposed amendment to the Water Act which states:

***(1) Prior to exploration licences being granted for subsidence mining operations on floodplains that have underlying groundwater systems forming part of the Murray-Darling system inflows, an independent expert study must be undertaken to determine the impacts of the proposed mining operations on the connectivity of groundwater systems, surface water and ground water flows and water quality and***

***(2) Where a substantial risk is identified, exploration licences must not be granted***

"If the Government and Opposition accept my amendment to the Water Act, much of the legal argument will be overcome as it will identify areas that can be mined and areas that should be left alone – something that even the Minerals Council of Australia and the NSW Minerals Council have mooted.

"This would save much time and money for all sides," Mr Windsor said.

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