

Miners drown us out

AS SOME readers may be aware, a 30-day public exhibition period, concluding last Friday, was provided for comment on the draft Mining Regulation 2010 and the draft NSW Code for Routine Exploration Activities with Low Environmental Impact.

I am writing to document the NSW Farmers Association's deep concern that agricultural and landholder stakeholders were not involved in direct consultation before this public exhibition, in spite of assurances that we would be, and at the lack of equal opportunity provided regarding consultation.

We believe the Minerals Council of NSW was not only consulted on these documents but also assisted with their drafting.

The code is in fact dated from last December, so has obviously been available for some time.

Unfortunately, the association, which represents the owners of land affected by mining and gas development, was not consulted until May this year, with the release of the documents for general public comment.

The comprehensive changes to the regulation have complex ramifications for landholders, which are not immediately obvious and require close analysis and discussion with the department.

Likewise, the code is impossible to evaluate in the absence of standards establishing criteria for such things as "low environmental impact", "harm" and "rehabilitation" of soil.

The association is greatly concerned that the use of explosives, for example, under the proposed code has been included as a "routine" activity with "low environmental impact" and therefore does not require an environmental impact assessment to assess any possible impact.

This is a matter of deep concern to our members and we believe a period of direct consultation of at

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least three months, supported by detailed departmental briefings, was warranted.

Hot on the heels of the Land Access Bill 2010, the association holds grave concerns that the Government is attempting to push through legislation in favour of mining over our natural resource assets and any other industry that stands in its way.

Given the Queensland example, we cannot allow this to occur. With a new minister at the helm, NSW Farmers looks forward to detailed consultation with the department and other stakeholders to ensure that this and any other further mining related legislation is properly considered and drafted in the interests of the environment and all stakeholders.

FIONA SIMSON,
Mining taskforce
chair,
NSW Farmers
Association,
Bundella.

