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## **BHP LETS THE TRUTH SLIP – WE HAVEN'T RULED OUT MINING UNDER THE PLAINS**

A senior BHP Billiton executive has revealed that despite the company's repeated public assurances that it has no intention of mining underneath the precious black soils and aquifers of the Liverpool Plains, it may change that position in the future.

Mr Phil Clarke, Vice-President of Resource Development for BHP Billiton, made the admission yesterday during an interview on ABC Radio New England.

Presenter Kelly Fuller questioned Mr Clarke repeatedly on exactly what BHP meant by its public commitment not to mine under the floodplains because 'current technology' did not allow it.

### **ABC New England 'Breakfast Program' - 28 May 2009**

CLARKE: *"It is valuable rich agricultural land and we're not going to disturb it through mining activity."*

FULLER: *"But if technology was developed that would allow you to get in without disturbing and causing subsidence, would you then abandon that commitment and move into that area?"*

CLARKE: *"But if you read the commitment, what it says is the current technology doesn't allow that to occur."*

Pressed repeatedly though, Mr Clarke finally revealed the true position.

CLARKE: *"If someone came up with a methodology into the future of how to mine and protect the agricultural land at the same time, yes, we would look at it but as far as I see that today that is a very hypothetical situation."*

Caroon Coal Action Group spokesman Tim Duddy said Mr Clarke had 'let the cat out of the bag'.

"Despite everything BHP has told the government, farmers and the community about staying away from the plains, Mr Clarke has confirmed what the community always suspected," Mr Duddy said.

"BHP will say anything to get a toehold here but the truth is once they start they won't stop until they get their hands on every last lump of coal – including the large reserves under our precious black soil plains and aquifers. Is it any wonder the community has no faith in anything BHP promises," he said.

Mr Duddy said if the NSW Government was genuine about protecting the floodplains, it must now come good on a proposal to excise them entirely from BHP's exploration licence.

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**"We must ensure mining does not destroy our environment, agricultural production, people's livelihoods, health and attachment to the land"**