

NEW SOUTH WALES MINERALS COUNCIL LTD

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MEDIA RELEASE**

EXPERTS TO BE SIDELINED BY RICHARDSON'S LONGWALL POLITICKING

The NSW Minerals Council has criticised calls for a Commission of Inquiry into longwall mining under rivers by the State Shadow Minister for the Environment.

NSWMC Chief Executive, Dr Nikki Williams, said the Independent Expert Panel announced by the State Government in December will provide a detailed, science based investigation into this important issue. The panel includes some of Australia's leading authorities on the impacts of mining near watercourses and natural features.

"There is an inference in Mr Richardson's call for a Commission of Inquiry, that the Independent Expert Panel is inadequate or even lacking in independence. Such an inference sullies the reputation of leading scientific practitioners."

"The coal mining industry relies on those who have the demonstrated technical expertise to provide advice in the areas of geology and environmental impacts. By politicising an already emotive issue which requires clear, science based assessment, Mr Richardson threatens to do a great disservice to the community and the industry."

Dr Williams said the industry welcomed the announcement of the Independent Expert Panel and remained confident that it would provide greater clarity on the issues for the entire community.

"There is obviously a degree of genuine community concern about the impacts of longwall mining on natural features, particularly water in the Southern Coalfields. The industry is equally genuine in its commitment to addressing those concerns."

"This inquiry is a chance for the facts to be put on the table. It is an opportunity for the communities of the Southern Coalfields, including the mining companies, to put forward their views and have them considered by the experts as part of a science based assessment of potential impacts, risk management, monitoring and the quality of remediation strategies."

"The industry recognises that mining activities can have some impacts. The Independent Panel is a positive move. We are confident that the process will facilitate an open discussion which supports an independent, science based assessment of the issue."

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