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Moratorium positive, but Premier must keep promise

Today Chris Hartcher, the NSW Minister for Resources and Energy, announced a temporary moratorium on coal seam gas (CSG) exploration and mining in Sydney's drinking water catchment 'Special Areas'. This will be in place until the outcome of the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer's review of CSG activities in NSW - currently expected in late 2014. Stop CSG Illawarra spokesperson Jess Moore stated:

"This is welcome announcement and a win for the campaign.

"A moratorium is positive – it offers temporary protection – but it doesn't change the fact that O'Farrell must keep his promise."

Before the last State election, Barry O'Farrell promised a ban: "The next Liberal/National Government will ensure that mining cannot occur... in any water catchment area, and will ensure that mining leases and mining exploration permits reflect that common sense; no ifs, no buts, a guarantee." Moore commented:

"The community expects the Coalition to vote for legislation currently in the NSW Lower House to ban CSG mining in Special Areas of the Sydney drinking water catchment. This moratorium doesn't let O'Farrell off the hook.

"We demand more than a delay. The review of CSG activities in NSW cannot become an excuse to develop CSG in our drinking water catchments. It is framed by terms of reference that focus on *how* to develop the industry, not *if or under what conditions* development is safe.

"The legislation must change, and our communities will fight until it does.

"We want the land in NSW that supplies our drinking water protected.

"CSG exploration and mining always involves unearthing water that is high in salt and methane, and can contain toxic and radioactive compounds and heavy metals. It involves methane leaks and industrial development that's incompatible with our drinking water catchments.

"A permanent ban on CSG in drinking water catchment areas is simply common sense."

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