



Mike Baird
Premier of NSW
Minister for Western Sydney

Troy Grant
Deputy Premier of NSW
Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Racing

MEDIA RELEASE

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FARMING FUTURE OF THE LIVERPOOL PLAINS SECURED

Coal mining will not occur under the famous black soils of Liverpool Plains after the NSW Government secured a buy-back of the Caroona mining exploration licence issued by the former Labor Government on some of Australia's most productive farming land.

Premier Mike Baird and Deputy Premier Troy Grant today announced that the NSW Government has reached a commercial agreement with BHP Billiton to buy back the Caroona exploration licence – issued in 2006 for underground coal mining covering approximately 344 square kilometres in the Liverpool Plains.

Mr Baird said, "The Liverpool Plains provide some of the most productive and valuable farming land in Australia, home to the iconic black soils and generations of successful food and fibre producers.

"After careful consideration, the NSW Government has determined that coal mining under these highly fertile black soil plains, as proposed by Labor, poses too great a risk for the future of this food-bowl and the underground water sources that support it.

"This decision guarantees the future of the State's most productive and fertile farming land, providing confidence for local farmers to invest in an industry that has the potential to be one of the food bowls of the world."

Mr Baird said the decision to buy back the Caroona licence was in line with advice from the NSW Planning Assessment Commission, which recommended the Government prohibit mining on the black soil plains.

Mr Grant said, "Labor caused this mess and finally we have been able to clean it up."

"The Liverpool Plains black soil is one of our most precious resources and today we have taken this major step to secure its long-term future."

Mr Baird said that coal mining in NSW has a long and promising future, but that the NSW Government would increase its efforts to remove all coal exploration licences from the strategic agricultural land of the Liverpool Plains.

He acknowledged the constructive role BHP Billiton had played in reaching agreement to rescind its licence to protect the black soils and indicated that negotiations with Shenhua had commenced to secure the excise of the parts of its mining title that encroached onto the strategic agricultural land of the Liverpool Plains.