



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

12 October 2017

New law overturns Springvale mine court ruling and weakens drinking water protection

The NSW Parliament passed overnight a regressive law to wipe away findings of the NSW Court of Appeal, allowing the continued operation of the Springvale coal mine and locking in pollution for developments in Sydney's drinking water catchment.

Environment groups condemned the government's heavy-handed response brought about by false claims and trumped up hysteria.

"The Berejilkian government not only disrespects the umpire's decision, it disrespects strong laws protecting Sydney's drinking water catchment", said Andrew Cox, 4nature president.

"The landmark case brought by 4nature confirmed that government had been failing to apply laws protecting Sydney's drinking water catchment – laws designed to progressively lower pollution."

"With catchment laws being interpreted generously, polluters kept on polluting and the quality of Sydney's drinking water deteriorated. The recent catchment audit confirmed this," said Mr Cox.

"Centennial Coal's destructive Springvale mine should never have been extended in 2015 without a water treatment plant it is now required to build," said Keith Muir, Colong Foundation for Wilderness coordinator.

"Not only did the NSW Government legislate to legalise Springvale mine's approval but its law indefinitely locks in pollution levels for any expanded developments in Sydney's drinking water catchment including mines, piggeries and water treatment plants."

NSW Premier Berejilkian's recent claims on catchment protection can't be believed. On Tuesday she said, "The legislation will make sure that the water quality has to be at least as good as what was there before the mine"ⁱ despite the law just passed removing that test. Last month she said "...I don't want anything compromising now and into the future, any of our water security or any of our prime agricultural land."ⁱⁱ

"Now's the time to protect the stunning Gardens of Stone area in a new conservation reserve," said Madi Maclean, Blue Mountains Conservation Society president.

"Promoting attractions on Lithgow's doorstep and developing clean energy is a critical step for transitioning a town with a declining coal industry towards a vibrant sustainable economy."

The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Sydney Drinking Water Catchment) Bill 2017* passed Parliament's Upper House unamended just before 11:30pm last night despite attempts by the Greens and Labor to remove provisions that weaken the water quality test.

Conservation groups also welcomed Labor leader Luke Foley's commitment in Parliament that if "there is a serious deterioration in the rules protecting Sydney's drinking water catchment, the next Labor Government will amend the legislation to restore the proper protections."

Next week's final Land and Environment Court hearing to determine the continued operation of Springvale mine has been cancelled.

Contact:

Andrew Cox, 4nature 0438 588 040

Keith Muir, Colong Foundation for Wilderness 0412 791 404

ⁱ News Limited 10 Oct 2017: NSW prepares to pass coalmine expansion
<http://www.news.com.au/national/breaking-news/nsw-set-to-green-light-coalmine-expansion/news-story/1970ca677f4f22fc22b6c40be6f32b18>

ⁱⁱ ABC News 13 Sep 2017 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-13/dendrobium-coal-mine-putting-water-catchments-at-risk/8937612>