



Don Harwin

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Minister for Resources
Minister for Energy and Utilities
Minister for the Arts

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, 6 June 2017

STRATEGIC CONVENTIONAL GAS EXPLORATION SITES IDENTIFIED IN WESTERN NSW

The NSW Government is taking responsible steps to increase conventional gas exploration in the state by implementing the Strategic Release Framework in the NSW Gas Plan.

Minister for Resources Don Harwin announced that the Government will take the first steps in releasing new areas for gas exploration – in areas that do not raise a conflict between gas exploration and the local community.

Areas for potential release will focus on conventional gas opportunities only, which will be subject to a rigorous regime that puts community and the environment first.

“When we released the NSW Gas Plan last year we said we would pause, reset and then recommence gas exploration on our terms,” Mr Harwin said. “With all 17 actions of the Gas Plan completed, Government is able to consider on a case-by-case basis the responsible development of the gas industry in NSW.

“This Government ended Labor’s attempt to establish coal seam gas throughout NSW. Communities can rest assured that our Government will not be reopening those wounds.”

Geologists have identified the Bancannia Trough north of Broken Hill and Pondie Range Trough north of Wilcannia for initial assessment by the Advisory Body for Strategic Release, an independently chaired expert group.

These two areas in the Far West of NSW show good potential for conventional gas resources and are located away from prime agricultural land and residential areas.

The Advisory Body will conduct a further assessment of the areas to consider the social, environmental and economic impacts of exploration and will undertake consultation with local communities to determine the areas suitability for exploration.

No areas will be released for exploration unless the Government is convinced that exploration can be done safely and appropriately. These areas will be put to a competitive auction process, where only fit and proper companies will be considered.

“We have responded to valid community concerns around the social and environmental impacts of gas exploration,” Mr Harwin said.

“This is in stark contrast to Labor who threw around gas licenses like confetti at a wedding without consulting local communities, and without adequate environmental protections.

“This resulted in vast areas of NSW covered in exploration titles, many granted to \$2 shelf companies without experience of working with landholders and communities.

“Labor’s method for releasing gas and coal titles led to malpractice and corrupt conduct that was spectacularly uncovered by ICAC, in the case of coal titles.”

In 2013 the Government commissioned an independent report by NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer Mary O’Kane, which recommended a world’s best practice regulatory regime.

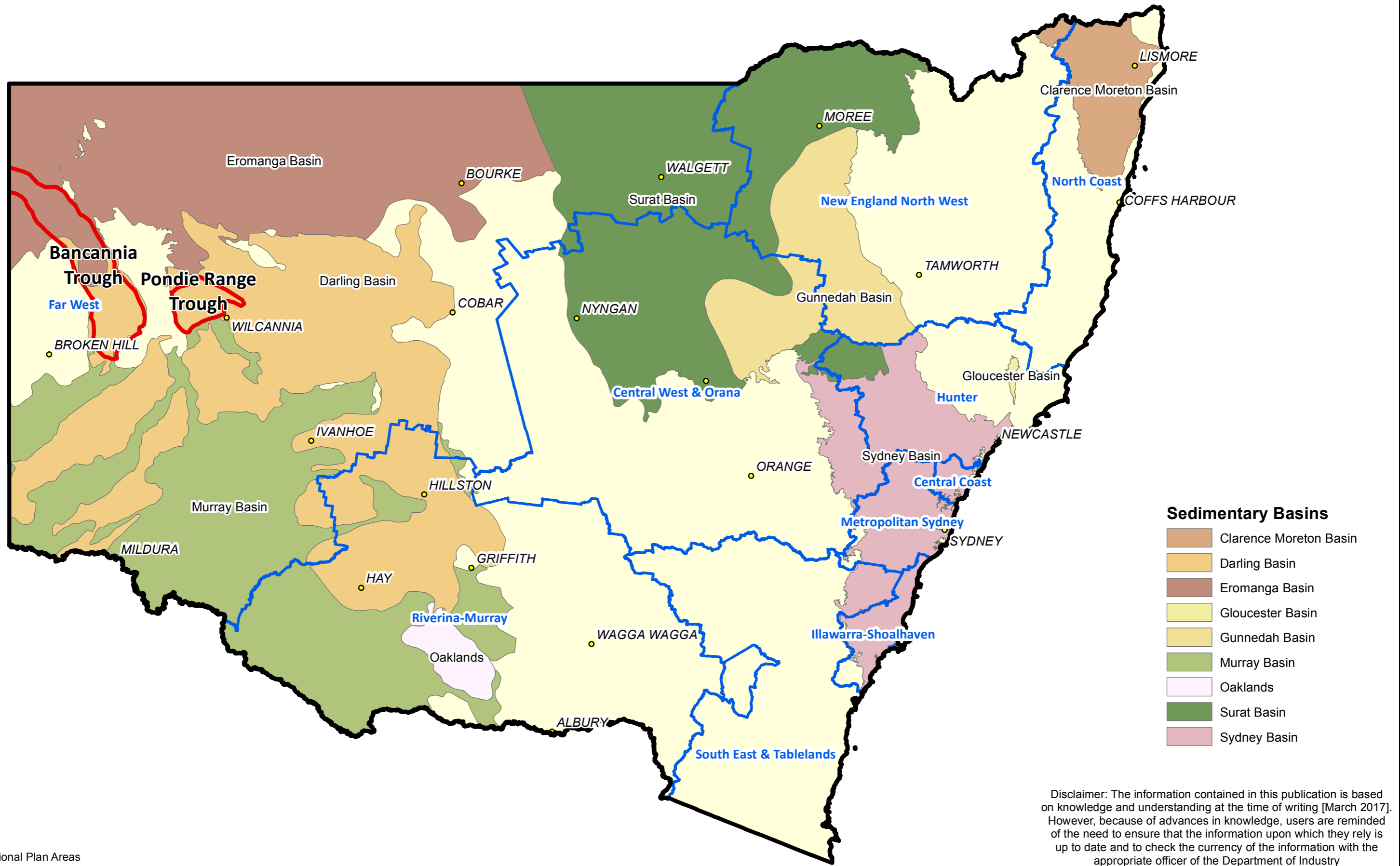
The Government then developed the NSW Gas Plan, in which the Government paused the sector and bought back exploration licences, reset protections to safeguard environmental and social values in line with community expectations to allow NSW to restart a responsible industry.

Professor O’Kane will oversee the start of the evaluation process, while Government seeks a chair for the Advisory Body through an expression of interest process.

As part of the NSW Gas Plan the Narrabri Gas proposal is under consideration with the Department of Planning and Environment as a strategic project.

The North Coast Plan rules out coal seam gas extraction and the Government has already bought back licenses there and in the Central Coast, Lower Hunter, Sydney Basin and the Illawarra-Shoalhaven.

Location of Bancannia & Pondie Range Troughs



- Sedimentary Basins**
- Clarence Moreton Basin
 - Darling Basin
 - Eromanga Basin
 - Gloucester Basin
 - Gunnedah Basin
 - Murray Basin
 - Oaklands
 - Surat Basin
 - Sydney Basin

Legend
 Regional Plan Areas

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing [March 2017]. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Industry the user's independent advisor.

