



The Hon Chris Hartcher

Minister for Resources and Energy

Special Minister of State

Minister for the Central Coast

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW GOVERNMENT RELEASES LIGHTNING RIDGE REVIEW FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

The NSW Government has today released the Wilcox Report commissioned to look into the problems facing landholders affected by opal claims in Lightning Ridge.

The report will be released for public comment for a period of 12 weeks to allow the community and stakeholders to have a say in the management of the opal mining industry.

Minister for Resources and Energy, Chris Hartcher said all submissions lodged will be considered and will help inform the Government's response to the Report's recommendations.

"After the 12 week period, the NSW Government will be considering all comments to develop a plan for the management and operation of the opal mining industry," Mr Hartcher said.

"Many of the recommendations contained in the Report may require legislative change. It is vital that all recommendations be considered very closely by those concerned.

"Opal mining, agriculture and tourism are the primary industries supporting the town of Lightning Ridge. Management of the opal mining industry and its interaction with landholders is critical to ensuring the continued prosperity of all parties."

Chief Justice of the Industrial Relations Court and former Federal Court judge, Murray Wilcox, was commissioned by the NSW Government to undertake the review.

During the course of the independent review, Mr Wilcox met with representatives of the Department, the NSW Farmers Association, mining associations, landholders, miners, State and Local Government bodies and members of the public.

"There are a number of valid concerns held by all parties," Mr Hartcher said.

"It's important that all recommendations are thoroughly reviewed to ensure all concerns are addressed.

"The former Government commissioned four reviews looking at issues affecting Lightning Ridge over sixteen years. Labor failed to act on a single one of them.

“We are finally addressing this important issue and taking the necessary steps to address concerns held.”

The NSW Government is currently finalising its response to the recommendations.

The Wilcox Report can be viewed at www.minerals.nsw.gov.au

Submissions are invited by email to minerals.comments@industry.nsw.gov.au
or by post addressed to: **Wilcox Report Comments**

PO Box 344

Hunter Regional Mail Centre NSW 2310

Submissions close on 22 February 2012.