



The Hon. Andrew Stoner MP
Deputy Premier of NSW
Minister for Trade and Investment
Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 5 December 2013

WOODSREEF ASBESTOS RISK CLOSES MINE ROAD

Acting Premier Andrew Stoner today announced that after much consultation with the community and health experts, a decision has been made to close Mine Road near Barraba in Northern NSW due to the associated risks from asbestos at the adjacent Woodsreef Asbestos Mine.

Mr Stoner said the public health risks to keep the road open were far too high with deposits of Chrysotile, or white asbestos – considered to be a carcinogen, present at the Woodsreef mine, which is managed as part of the NSW Derelict Mines Program.

“At the end of the day the dangers to public safety outweigh any consideration of keeping the road open,” Mr Stoner said.

“The areas of processed friable asbestos material stockpiled throughout the mine site and the expert advice received by the Woodsreef Mine Taskforce says that it is unsafe.

“In addition to this, tailings material containing asbestos has been deposited on the surface of Mine Road and subsequently disturbed by passing vehicles.

“It is well known that asbestos in this condition is highly hazardous to human health.

“The NSW Government is aware that some local residents wish to keep the road open, but it would be remiss of us in our public duty if we took any other course of action.”

Mr Stoner thanked the Member for Tamworth Kevin Anderson for his efforts in taking every opportunity to look at options for the area, including chairing a public meeting at Barraba to present and discuss the scoping study into an alternative route around Woodsreef Mine.

The report on the scoping study recommended the use of the existing road network rather than construction of alternate access and the Government has accepted this advice.

Mr Anderson said he was disappointed with the decision but completely understood the reasons behind the closure.

“An enormous amount of time and effort by many people went into this single Mine Road issue alone, and I thank them for their efforts, however it’s now time to get on

with the rehabilitation of the derelict asbestos mine site, as per the recommendations of the Ombudsman's report and the Woodsreef Mine Taskforce," Mr Anderson said.

"Unfortunately it will take some landholders a little while longer when they need to access some areas but the decision has been made. I was hoping that we could find an alternate route but the cost was way too high.

"The NSW Government is committed to ensuring that Barraba is a key centre with major investment in the region leading to further potential growth, including the soon to be completed:

- \$6.75 million for Split Rock Dam to Barraba Water Pipeline project,
- \$852,000 for the brand new Fire Station,
- \$23,500 for a multi-function court and new skate park and the
- \$17,000 upgrade of the seniors hall."

Once the Mine Road is closed, the road title will be retained by the State of New South Wales and managed in conjunction with the adjoining derelict Woodsreef mine.