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**NOTHING STOPPING NORTH PARKES EXPLORATION BUT A LETTER AND 55c STAMP  
Mine boss playing politics with local jobs as part of Minerals Council campaign**

Northparkes mine is playing a cynical game with the jobs of local workers by unnecessarily suspending its exploration program to support a broader political campaign being waged by the NSW Minerals Council.

“The truth is there is nothing standing in the way of exploration continuing at Northparkes that cannot be resolved by a simple letter of notification to landholders but it seems clear there is an ulterior motive at play here,” said CCAG spokesman Tim Duddy.

Mr Duddy said the NSW Minerals Council had deliberately misrepresented the implications of a recent NSW Supreme Court decision in favor of farmers on the Liverpool Plains which found mining companies had been breaching the Mining Act by failing to properly notify all landholders of the access to the land being sought. Landholders include anyone with a legal interest who might be identified on a land title.

“The Supreme Court case did nothing other than confirm the requirements of the existing NSW Mining Act which has been in place for more than a decade,” Mr Duddy said.

“Notification simply requires that anyone mentioned on the land title receive a letter of notification from the miner with a copy of the terms of access to the property being sought.

“If there are no objections, as we are told is the case right across the Northparkes exploration area, then there is no issue and the ‘access arrangement’ is agreed. Nothing further is required,” he said.

CCAG says unfortunately Northparkes - whose manager Dr Craig Stegman is on the executive of the NSW Minerals Council - has been a willing participant in a ploy designed by the Minerals Council to support its broader political campaign to change the Mining Act.

“The Council’s chief Nikki Williams claimed the Supreme Court decision would ‘bring exploration across the State to a halt’ and they clearly needed an example to support that claim. Sadly her colleague, Dr Stegman, seems to have been a willing participant in that deception,” Mr Duddy said.

The NSW Minerals Council is campaigning for retrospective changes to the NSW Mining Act which give miners more freedom to enter private land and remove the ability of landholders to take legal action against miners if they breach their licence conditions.

“Dr Stegman needs to explain to those workers who were laid off why the mine has not simply written to all landholders in the exploration area to seek their permission to come on to the land. That is what the Mining Act had required for years,” Mr Duddy said.

“It is simply nonsense to suggest it is any more complex than that, particularly when we are told all landholders in the exploration area support the exploration going ahead. A letter with a copy of the proposed ‘access arrangement’ is all that is needed and the Act will have been complied with.

“I understand Dr Stegman has been put in an awkward position but he needs to come clean with those workers he laid off and stopped playing political games at the expense of the Parkes community,” he said.

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“We must ensure mining does not destroy our environment, agricultural production, people’s livelihoods, health and attachment to the land”