

Media Release - 10th April 2013

NRG calls for NSW government to cancel local Petroleum Exploration Licences

Scott Sledge, President of the Northern Rivers Guardians, today called on NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell to cancel the region's exploration licences (PELs) which are used by private companies to prospect for coal seam gas (CSG) and other fossil fuels.

"The political climate has changed in NSW, along with the weather, and we want the government's attitude to change with it," he said.

"We welcome the announcements by Metgasco and Dart Energy that they have suspended all activity in the Northern Rivers and I believe that now is the right time to declare this area to be a frack-free zone," said Mr. Sledge. "The Northern Rivers is one of the world's most diverse ecological communities and our future depends on careful management. We don't want to be overrun by a 'gas rush' that will destroy tourism and agriculture and our wonderful rural lifestyles for the sake of short-term profits for a few big investors. If the government can protect urban areas and certain industries (horse breeding and grape growing) from mining it can surely protect this marvellous region.

"The Northern Rivers population has voted against CSG (87% in Lismore LG elections and around 90% by *Lock The Gate* neighbourhood surveys) and has blockaded drilling operations for more than 100 days near Grafton and Kyogle.

"We won't let CSG mining happen here anyway, so why prolong the agony?" Mr Sledge asked. "Northern Rivers Guardians Inc is open to all the community. People support our work by membership or donations through our web site," he said.

"The Coalition government believes that the current CSG problem was created by the previous ALP government which gave out licences "like confetti" according to NSW Planning Minister Mr. Brad Hazzard.

"I challenge the current government to come into the new era of sustainable practices. Cancel the petroleum exploration licences and invest in renewable energy."

Following last week's ABC *Four Corners* "Gas Leak" program, AGL announced it is pulling back from its CSG mining expansion at Camden near Sydney.

"According to BHP we have plenty of conventional gas for the foreseeable future," said Mr. Sledge, "so I hope the government will stop listening to panic-merchants who say the lights will go out in NSW. If we switch now to safe renewable energy that is generated from solar and ocean wave action we may save ourselves from some of the disasters which are increasing due to climate change," Sledge said.

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