

NRG calls for NSW government to cancel local Petroleum Exploration Licences

Scott Sledge, President of the Northern Rivers Guardians, has 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.

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. 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.

In March the NSW government announced it would protect urban areas and certain industries (horse breeding and grape growing) from mining.* It could easily protect our marvellous region. This month the NSW government redefined its proposal to rule out mining on prime agricultural, by requiring landowners to submit proof that their property qualifies on a 10-point criterion. This means that no areas will be safe and mining can proceed **just about anywhere**, despite the government spin about new safeguards. We need whole regions protected as a prelude to a total ban on mining fossil fuels. The waterways are all connected and no one has any way of cleaning a polluted aquifer.

The Northern Rivers population has voted against CSG (87% in Lismore LG elections and more than 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?

Northern Rivers Guardians Inc is open to all the community. People can support their lifestyles and protect the environment by joining NRG or donating through our web site: northernriversguardians.org

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. Now.

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, 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 pollution and climate change. Be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

All statements attributable to Scott Sledge,
50 Gabal Road Lillian Rock NSW 2480
Ph: 0266 897466 /0266 745213

* the admission that CSG mining is not safe (2 km exclusion zones from residential areas and horse studs and wineries, makes the government responsible under the Duty of Care principle. If CSG is not safe for horses how can it be safe for cattle? If dangerous for winegrapes, how can it be safe for vegetables? If people in cities become ill from gas pollution, how about rural people and villagers? This seems a cynical attempt to split opposition to CSG mining for political purposes in an election year. In reality it is another asbestos disaster in the making, ONLY WORSE as CSG pollutes the air land and water. We must insist that the mining industry proves beyond doubt that CSG is safe before it can be allowed to proceed.

Metgasco well decommissioning program - From LTG Northern Rivers Alliance on-line newsletter (April 2013):

Metgasco's drilling manager Simon Hann recently made contact with the regional alliance to inform us about their upcoming decommissioning program and offer community groups the opportunity to "visit [their] operation and satisfy themselves that the activities were being conducted in accordance with the decommissioning program".

The response of the community group reps in the regional alliance was to request further information. This was supplied and can be [viewed here](#). The consensus of the alliance and other active blockaders we have spoken to is that the risk of any ongoing environmental impacts from existing wells should be minimised and the best way to achieve this is for the wells to be decommissioned in as timely and thorough a manner as possible.

Whilst blockading CSG exploration activities has been an effective part of the campaign to halt the expansion of the industry, under these circumstances, we want to see the wells made as environmentally safe as possible and for Metgasco to finalise their current operations and leave. Therefore, the alliance has agreed to take up the offer to have community observers on site periodically during the decommissioning program. If you would like to be part of this effort please [email us](#).

50 Gabal Road Lillian Rock NSW 2480 Australia
Ph: 61 (Australia) 2 6689 7466