

Every drilling contractor intending to work in the Northern Rivers needs to consider:

- Your equipment may be tied up in lengthy blockades and peaceful direct action at any time ;
- your insurance policies may not provide cover you for losses due to civil unrest;
- Small exploration companies on a tight budgets may not be able to

I write on behalf of the **Northern Rivers Guardians**, Inc. a member of **Gasfields-free Northern Rivers**, an alliance of community-based organizations dedicated to protecting the environment and lifestyles of this region. We come under the umbrella of **Lock the Gate Ltd**.

Metgasco is a small gas exploration company proposing to install gas fields over a large area of highly productive land and roll out pipelines through important natural environments and rural lands in the Northern Rivers of NSW, threatening to destroy habitat that is precious to generations of Australians:

- Farms that produce a wide variety of foods, including macadamia nuts, coffee, organic fruit and vegetables, sugar cane , and rich pastures for grazing animals;
- A tourist destination with a huge variety of B&B's, farm stays, retreats, resorts, and parks and gardens;
- Mostly unspoiled nature reserves that attract visitors from all over the world;
- Vibrant communities of musicians, artists and markets known and loved far and wide.
- An environment that a high-density population of people choose to call home.

Gas mining as proposed by **Metgasco** would destroy the fabric of our communities, put our unpolluted air and water resources at risk, drive away tourists, damage the health of our children and create another industrial landscape.
<http://www.echo.net.au/2013/11/enough-to-make-you-sick/>

RESIDENTS IN THE NORTHERN RIVERS WON'T LET THAT HAPPEN!

Communities around the region have decided that they won't tolerate CSG mining.

I write to advise you of significant risks that you may want to consider should you be approached by **Metgasco** (or any other company) trying to contract your company to drill in the Northern Rivers.

These risks include:

- No 'social license' for fossil fuel mining to operate in the region. Metgasco has made few friends in the Northern Rivers. A demonstrated majority of the population opposed to gasfield development across Metgasco's license areas.
- A long history of activists protecting our region against inappropriate development since the 1970s .
- Opposition from recently-elected regional Federal MPs from both ALP (Richmond) and Nationals (Page).

Refer: <http://www.northernstar.com.au/videos/kevin-hogans-maiden-speech/21086/>

- A large, highly organized and mobilized population engaged in community defense strategies,
trained in non-violent direct action and effective political activity.

We have a wide network of community groups which utilize sophisticated strategies. Most of those arrested in recent community protests have enjoyed free legal help and have been acquitted by the Courts.

Lismore voted overwhelmingly (87%) against CSG during a referendum conducted by the AEC alongside the September 2012 Local government elections.

Refer: <http://www.abc.net.au/elections/nsw/2012/council/?page=Lismore>

Other Northern Rivers communities – including Byron Bay and Nimbin - followed with neighbourhood surveys and public meetings. More than 120 towns and villages have now declared themselves to be

“Gasfield – free.” On 23rd November 2013 Kyogle celebrated its own Gasfield- Free Roads Declarations Day together with the launch of a major report on the adverse effects gas mining has on human health. The Mayor, Danielle Mulholland, received declarations from community representatives who had interviewed more than 2400 people. 91% of these said they do not want CSG!

Refer: [Kyogle says it loudly and proudly: no CSG! - Coal Seam Gas Australia](http://coalseamgasnews.org/news/world/australia/nsw/kyogle-says-it-loudly-and-proudly-no-csg/)
<http://coalseamgasnews.org/news/world/australia/nsw/kyogle-says-it-loudly-and-proudly-no-csg/>

Thousands of landholders have locked their gates against intrusion by gas companies. Stakeholder organisations grow stronger. Metgasco’s Chairman said on ABC radio in October 2013 that he expected our community would accept the exploration well at Bentley as it would be into tight sandstone and not primarily target CSG. Our community is not fooled by such talk and knows that the only way for such companies to be profitable is to establish a fully-linked industrial gas field. There is also doubt that such gas fields will be allowed to establish anywhere in NSW. ICAC has commenced investigations against the minister responsible for promoting unconventional gas in NSW. There seems a stench surrounding all this.

Refer:

http://www.afr.com/p/australia2/fuming_years_of_nsw_gas_supply_lost_W6Q6Q4NMHcGejyQtojt7bM

NRG members joined with other citizens to form **Lock The Gate Northern Rivers** regional alliance to oppose the latest incursions by coal seam gas mining company **Metgasco**: first at Glenugie south of Grafton (November 2012 - January 2013) and then at Doubtful Creek southwest of Kyogle (January –March 2013.) Opponents of CSG have learned a lot from the experience of community opposition and are preparing for Metgasco’s third attempt which they have announced for Bentley, only 14 km from Lismore .

In a press release on 4th October 2013, **Metgasco** told shareholders ...“*the Company was also bearing the brunt of the anti-CSG lobby, with consequent security issues for key stakeholders including staff, contractors and landholders. In addition, 2 offices and 27 staff were placing a substantial burden on the Company's finances given there was no incoming production or revenue.* “

Megasco suspended operations in March 2013 and laid off most of their staff. The **Metgasco** press release went on to say, “*It is worth noting that all other CSG companies in NSW, including AGL, Santos, Dart Energy, Planet Gas and Apex followed Metgasco's lead by suspending operations, substantially delaying exploration programmes or withdrawing completely from NSW. AGL had to write down \$343 million and withdraw from its well advanced Camden project, while Santos' Pilliga programme has been delayed and scaled down significantly. Metgasco's business interests and operating environment are no different from these other companies operating in NSW.*”

Thousands of residents are prepared to put their time, their money and their energy into a fight to maintain community, nature and their livelihoods. Their determination to defend this region should be taken seriously. It is massive. 7000 people turned out to march against CSG in Lismore in 2012 and another 4000 in Murwillumbah.

(Check out www.csgfreenorthernrivers.com & <http://www.northernstar.com.au/news/call-to-use-new-law-to-ban-all-csg-in-region/2097937/>)

Metgasco required a massive police escort to get the **Lucas** drill rig convoy into the Glenugie site south of Grafton - including 60 members of the Public Order and Riot Squad sent from Sydney - and then another large police presence to get it out again past citizen roadblocks. To get into the test drill site near Kyogle known as Doubtful Creek a contingent of 75 police was required to break through the resident's blockade. Community opposition prevented the drilling equipment from leaving that site even after **Metgasco** capitulated and announced a suspension of all activity in the Northern Rivers. Police were required to extract the drilling equipment. Every day the citizens' blockade disrupted operations and every movement in or out of both sites were held up until a Police escort could be organised. A 24 - hour vigil was maintained for more than 100 days.

For your own sake, we urge you not to engage in drilling for fossil fuels in NSW. Opposition by local opponents may cause your company significant and costly delays if you come to work for **Metgasco**. You are likely to experience similar problems as **Lucas Drilling** if you choose to become involved in drilling operations in the Northern Rivers. We send this letter as a courtesy to provide you with information on local conditions. Feel free to contact me.
Sincerely,

Scott Sledge, JP
President
Northern Rivers Guardians, Inc
PO Box 309 Murwillumbah, NSW 2484