



MEDIA RELEASE

Sydney Gas plan to install Coal Seam Methane Gas well in picturesque Hunter Valley village

The residents of Broke are up in arms!

South of Singleton in the Lower Hunter Valley and the centre of an important wine growing, farming and tourism area, Broke is another site where Sydney Gas have been given licence by the NSW Department of Primary Industries to explore for Coal Seam Methane Gas.

Sydney Gas has purchased a large block of land within the village of Broke. This land was recently the subject of a development application that was knocked back by Singleton Council. The applicant, Mr Rogers, wanted to establish a heavy machinery business on his land but was told by the Council that this is not permissible within the village boundaries under planning regulations. Mr Rogers then privately sold the land to Sydney Gas. Under the terms of the Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991, which governs the exploration licence issued by the NSW Minister of Primary Industries, Sydney Gas have the right to install a pilot gas well on this same block of land and the Council and residents have no power to stop it. This law rides roughshod over the rights of the community and concentrates power into the hands of the Minister, Ian Macdonald.

A pilot gas well will operate for a number of months to test the productive value of the coal seam. The process of running a pilot gas well involves significant environmental risks. Methane Gas is held within a coal seam by water pressure. Before they can extract the gas, the water pressure must first be reduced by removing the water from the coal seam. As each coal seam is effectively a groundwater aquifer, significant volumes of water can be produced from each well; up to 100,000 litres per day. The water extraction process has been known to take up to 18 months in Queensland and overseas.

The extraction of this water presents three major problems:

1. The water is extremely saline and contains high concentrations of dissolved solids such as heavy metals, requiring very careful handling and safe disposal by road tanker.
2. As water is extracted from the coal seam it also depletes natural groundwater reserves and aquifers which can have consequences for other regional land uses, such as wine growing, which may experience a loss of net usable bore water.

3. Methane may escape unpredictably through cracks and vents hundreds of metres away, as happened in Stratford near Gloucester in NSW, then seep through the ground and water creating dead zones for vegetation and poisoning water courses as has been experienced at the Cataract River south of Sydney; overseas, it has even been known to vent into people's houses. Methane is flammable, explosive and deadly in enclosed spaces.

Under current legislation, there is no requirement for a vigorous assessment of impacts on environment, heritage and tourism values. This undemocratic, oppressive and draconian legislation is being applied by the NSW Government throughout the state in an uncontrolled and rapacious grab for resources regardless of the consequences.

Sydney Gas will be called to account at a meeting with the residents of Broke to be held at Nightingale Vineyard, 1239 Milbrodale Road, Broke, NSW 2330 on the 20th August from 7.00 pm.

WAGE have been called to bolster the large numbers of demonstrators being rallied to attend from the area surrounding Broke.

Further background information can be found in the news section of the WAGE website **www.wage.org.au**

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