

GAS WATCH 134

AGL ENERGY – the latest lessons in avoiding “community consultation”

Number 1.

By accident, we have just noticed on the Department of Defence website that **AGL** has applied to the Commonwealth Government for permission to explore for coal seam methane gas on the Army Base at Singleton.

No mention of this has been made to the affected community. No community consultation, whatsoever. None.

Typical of the secretive attitude of these coal seam methane miners to gain approvals, and then notify the community and pretend that it is involved in the community and in community consultation.

When **AGL** was asked for a comment about this secretive exploration they are reported as stating: *“As part of our ongoing consultation process for our natural coal seam gas exploration program, **AGL** has sought access to the Singleton Army Base to conduct preliminary exploration work. This application has been made to the relevant authority, the Department of Finance and Deregulation.”*

Someone should speak to **AGL** and try and explain to them in simple, easy to understand terms, that “ongoing consultation” does not mean sneaking off and trying to explore on Commonwealth land when their Petroleum Exploration Licence excludes “Lands vested in the Commonwealth of Australia” without telling anybody in the community, hoping the community doesn’t regularly trawl through the Department of Defence website to find their secrets.

What is the point in having conditions in the PEL excluding certain lands when the likes of **AGL** completely ignore the condition, as they have with other conditions of their Licence in the past, eg dumping saline water onto pasture; having an employee who stole protest signs; wrongly using a de-gasser resulting in a well blowout. The whole approach by the regulators is laughable. No punishment is dealt out for these serious breaches.

Number 2.

AGL has told the Department which land in PEL 267 and PEL 4 it is prepared to abandon on renewal of the PELs – the Act requires **AGL** to abandon 25% of their surface area.

A request of **AGL** to provide details of the blocks which are proposed to be abandoned resulted in the response: *“AGL’s position regarding the proposed blocks for relinquishment will not be made publically (sic) available until these have been approved by the NSW government.”* Don’t you just love **AGL**’s understanding of community consultation (and their spelling).

Unless there is Ministerial intervention, the Department will approve the **AGL** selected blocks being abandoned. We understand **AGL** does not intend to abandon any blocks in Broke, Bulga, Milbrodale or Fordwich, or any blocks in the main winegrowing areas of the lower Hunter.

Question: Who is running the mining approvals in this State? The coal seam methane miners, or the Government.

Number 3.

AGL was expelled from the Hunter Valley Wine Industry Association which said AGL "*persistently and willfully acted in a manner prejudicial to the interests of the Association*".

AGL doesn't seem to be too happy with this, so in an attempt to ingratiate itself with the wine industry, AGL has spoken to local winemakers saying that it will set up some scholarship for a winemaker to win a trip around the world.

Fortunately most winemakers we have spoken to intend to have nothing to do with AGLs vacuous proposals.

Number 4.

We have been told that AGL has sold the winegrapes from its Broke vineyards at a cheap price to a middle man who will turn the grapes into wine and sell it on the bulk market.

This behaviour, in a period when the small winegrower is struggling to sell any fruit at all. So, AGL comes along and floods the market, and puts the small winegrower out of business.

Don't you just love having this methane miner as part of your community?

Number 5.

Locals report that AGL has made an offer to purchase even more land adjacent to the Pokolbin State Forest. AGL of course haven't mentioned anything of this to the affected community, that might be community consultation. We can't be having that. This pretty much confirms AGLs proposals to drill under the State Forest, where they have announced seismic exploration to take place later this year.

The only good news from this is that landowners are **LOCKING THEIR GATES**. Not having anything to do with AGL. Forcing AGL to buy land rather than gain access agreements.

It appears that AGL is getting worse and worse at either community consultation, or in being a part of any community it invades. It appears more and more arrogant in its approach to communities.

**Don't let AGL talk you into allowing them onto your property for any reason.
Don't cooperate with AGL in any way at all.**

We need to drive AGL from the Hunter Valley.

Oh, and they like to call coal seam methane "natural gas". The only thing natural about it is that nature sequestered it in coal seams hundreds of metres below the surface so that it wouldn't kill the planet. It should be left where it was put.



PO BOX 120 BROKE NSW 2330 www.huntermvalleyprotectionalliance.com

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Contact: Graeme Gibson. 65791062

