

GAS WATCH 28.

Community Consultative Committee – First meeting.

The Committee had its inaugural meeting on 31st October. The meeting was chaired by the Government appointee, Pam Alan, former NSW Environment Minister whose details can be found at

<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/members.nsf/V3AllMembers/2944> .

Our community representatives were Bob Kennedy, Barry Smith, Hu Upward and Graeme Gibson.

Sydney Gas was represented by John Saunders. John has been the Chairman of Sydney Gas for about 10 months and is currently acting as the Executive Chairman following the loss of two CEOs during his chairmanship. Frank Krstic, the general counsel of Sydney Gas and former employee of the Department of Primary Industry also represented Sydney Gas, as did Joe Choudhury the technical advisor to the CEO.

Singleton Council was represented by Andrew Henry and Crs. McNamara and Sharrock.

Mineral Resources was represented by Julie Moloney of its Maitland office and Monique Meyer of its Singleton office.

Pam Alan opened the meeting saying that she had to report regularly to the Minister who had briefed her to encourage a frank and open exchange of information.

The meeting was more of an introductory meeting rather than being able to really get down to specifics in the allotted 2 hours. Some time was also spent in agreeing upon a Charter for the Committee. There was no real exchange of information at this meeting.

Julie Moloney delivered a presentation covering the Exploration Project, and outlining the requirements of the Petroleum (Offshore) Act and also Petroleum Exploration Licences.

She also covered Land holders rights, access arrangements and compensation under the Act; the arbitration process for access to lands for exploration and the role of the Mining Warden. All this information she had downloaded from the Department's web site and you can access it at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

Sydney Gas then made a presentation. It was basically the same presentation given to the AGM of Sydney Gas last year and similar to those presentations which can be found on the Sydney Gas website which you can access at <http://www.sydneygas.com/content.php/54.html>

Bob Kennedy then made a power point presentation on behalf of the community. A copy of that presentation is being forwarded to all members of HB GAG. The community representatives also presented a written submission to the Committee. A copy of that submission is also being forwarded.

By the time these various presentations were finalised there was little time for general discussion.

The main points discussed in the little time left was firstly the lack of community consultation by Sydney Gas and its refusal to share with the community its Review of Environmental Factors at the time that document is lodged with the Department. The Department officers said that the Department encouraged Sydney Gas to provide the community with the REF at the time of lodgement. Sydney Gas wasn't convinced, it appeared, and Pam Alan directed Sydney Gas to report at the next meeting whether or not it proposed to share these documents.

The question of the excision of the Broke and Bulga areas from the Petroleum Exploration Licence area was also discussed, albeit briefly. This proposal was originally put to Sydney Gas on 5th July with no real response. John Saunders said that he would take our submission to his Board the following day.

The question of why Sydney Gas abandoned exploration in the Dooralong/Yarramalong Valleys was also raised. This is a question we have been asking Sydney Gas for over a year with no response other than an answer from Chairman and Deputy Chairman on 5th July that they didn't know why it was abandoned and undertaking to get back to us with an answer. We told them at the time we didn't believe that answer.

At the CCC meeting John Saunders told his Technical Advisor to tell us why it was abandoned, however he didn't, he merely asked a question. It must be said here that there is no way that these senior representatives of Sydney Gas don't know why they abandoned their exploration in the Wyong Shire. It is important that we obtain an answer to this. Pam Alan asked Sydney Gas to have an answer for us by the next meeting.

The damage occasioned to the local roads as a result of the Seismic survey was also discussed. Sydney Gas said that the roads were currently being examined technically to see if they had been improperly formed or whether it was Sydney Gas's activities specifically which caused the damage. The Department indicated that Council had signed off on the approval for the Seismic Survey. We pointed out to the meeting that whatever Council, or the Department, signed off on was based on misleading information contained in the REF, ie that small 4WD vehicles would be used when in fact a number of huge trucks were used. Again it was forced home that if REFs were able to be scrutinised by the community prior to approvals, then false, dishonest or misleading statements could be addressed and approvals considered on their actual merits.

Sydney Gas again invited us to go and visit their operation at Camden, and again we accepted telling them that all they had to do was arrange it and we'd be there. This offer and acceptance has been going on since December '06, but Sydney Gas has never actually organised it.

Sydney Gas provided us with a copy of its 2007 Annual Report. This will shortly appear on the Sydney Gas website. It shows a loss for the year of \$24.740 million.

That's about it. We meet again on 26th November when, having all the submissions and introductions out of the way, we should be able to get down to some meaningful discussion. If we have missed anything in this report, we will report further when the minutes of the meeting are circulated to us.

Contact HB GAG for free legal advice in relation to Sydney Gas, particularly if they approach you seeking to drill on your own property.

DO NOT LET SYDNEY GAS ON TO YOUR PROPERTY. THEY HAVE NO RIGHTS TO ENTER WITHOUT YOU SIGNING AN ACCESS AGREEMENT. Encourage your neighbours also to resist Sydney Gas. Do you want a Gas Well next door? Well, do you?

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