

12 December 2013

## Media Release

**Groundswell Gloucester chair Julie Lyford said today:**

***“Groundswell Gloucester calls on AGL to demonstrate care for water resources, community health and businesses reliant on water, soil and landscape, by withdrawing its application to frack coal seam gas wells at the Waukivory Pilot Project. We call on the Office of Coal Seam Gas to demonstrate a commitment to independent and comprehensive assessments by rejecting the application on the grounds that it contains discrepancies and insufficient detail to enable a satisfactory assessment of risk.*”**

***“We join Gloucester Shire Council and Midcoast Water in expressing disappointment and concern that AGL applied to frack the Waukivory Pilot Project wells before key water studies and other fundamental issues have been addressed and all the risks properly examined.”***

On Tuesday 17 December members of Groundswell Gloucester will meet with the Department of the Environment, the Environmental Protection Authority, the Water Commissioner and the Office of Coal Seam Gas (OCSG). We will present detailed research exposing significant and deeply concerning risks in AGL's 'Review of Environmental Factors', an application to frack four coal seam gas wells (Waukivory Pilot Project).

Requests to meet with the Premier, other politicians and departmental heads have as yet gone unanswered. Planning Minister Brad Hazzard declined a meeting.

Gloucester does not have the mandatory 2 km exclusion zone that applies elsewhere due to the State and Federal approval of 110 – 330 CSG wells made just prior to the O'Farrell 2km exclusion decision. With homes only 200m from gas wells that AGL plans to frack, we have grave concerns.

**Groundswell has today published a detailed critique of AGL's application entitled 'Exposing the Risks: Fundamental Flaws in AGL's application to frack CSG wells in Gloucester'.**

**'Exposing the Risks' reveals:-**

- When fracking AGL will perforate gas wells to connect with coal seams. Numerous reports, including AGL's own material, demonstrate that the Gloucester basin coal seams are naturally connected with aquifers. Despite recommendations to mitigate risk by avoiding fault zones, AGL's gas wells have been drilled through faults, increasing the likelihood of coal seam water, gas and chemical migration.
- AGL plans to inject approximately 20,000L of potentially toxic chemicals and constituents into water-bearing coal seams. One of these chemicals bears the warning "Do not release into the environment". AGL told Gloucester Community Consultative Committee last year that all fracking chemicals have been independently assessed for Human Health and Environmental Risk by the EPA. The EPA states they have not carried out these

assessments. When AGL lodged its fracking application, many of the chemicals had also not been assessed by NICNAS for use in fracking.

- The Chief Scientist report states that 50 – 85% of fracking chemicals remain in the ground; potentially remaining in produced water that AGL will later irrigate crops with.
- AGL has provided no health impact study or locally collected air quality data, despite over 50 homes being within 2km of the fracking site.
- Three of the four wells AGL plans to frack are constructed in the middle of a floodplain, within preliminary estimates of the 1 in 100 year flood levels.
- Indications that the REF does not meet the mandatory requirements of the Code of Practice for Fracture Stimulation for Coal Seam Gas. This CoP is also overdue for review.
- There are numerous discrepancies and contradictions in AGLs published statements.
- AGL appears to be rushing to undertake this pilot study to meet its commercial deadlines before critical scientific information is available and before there can be a detailed review of the design of their pilot program.

Very serious issues concerning the current Tiedman's irrigation trial (Triticale crop) have also been identified, including the following points:-

- Trial only started in April 2103 so no measurable salt yet in the soil as there have been relatively small quantities of produced water used for irrigation so far.
- Therefore, the current results will not indicate anything about long-term salt issues.
- Everywhere in the world where salty irrigation water has been applied to soil the end result is a disaster.
- AGL have tested the water for heavy metals but where are the results of the tests on the plants?? (see attached letter from Ed Robinson, farmer in Gloucester).
- Triticale actively takes up trace elements such as cadmium, copper, lead, arsenic and zinc from soil and water and CSG produced water contains these chemicals.
- Farmers might be happy to get the fodder in a drought time but do they know what heavy metals could be in the fodder fed to their cattle?
- Why were the Department of Agriculture and the Environment Protection Authority excluded from the trial?

We are aware that the OCSG has just received an "Addendum to the Review of Environmental Factors" from AGL. Future releases of 'Exposing the Risks' will consider this addendum. We maintain that there remain unresolvable risks evident in the original REF and it should be rejected, rather than further wasting Government resources in considering additional AGL amendments.

*"It's really disturbing to see the differences between what's in scientific reports, what's in the REF and what AGL has been saying to our community. When you put it all together, AGL's Waukivory pilot project seems very risky,"* says Jenni O'Neill, local resident and volunteer researcher on 'Exposing the Risks'.

*Julie Lyford says "AGL is jumping the gun. It is vital that the state government do not allow fracking in the Gloucester basin before critical scientific information is collated to assess the*

*high risk of serious and permanent damage to our environment and water systems. AGL do not have a social license to take risks with our water, air and health.*

*It's astounding that even though the Code of Practice for CSG fracking encourages a high level of community consultation, there is no process for the government to consider independent community reviews of AGL's fracking application. We are creating our own submission process by releasing our comprehensive analysis of the Waukivory pilot project: 'Exposing the Risks'."*

**Further information:**

**For general enquiries phone**

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