

The NSW Gas Plan

"The NSW Government has once again failed to offer anything concrete to the people of Gloucester who will be living with gas wells much closer than the 2km exclusion zone and who will continue to breathe a broth of fine particulates every calm morning as AGL burn off tons of gas. Rather than creating any change for Gloucester this plan warns the community that the State intends that they should meekly accept their fate." said David Hare-Scott, Vice President Groundswell Gloucester

Minister Anthony Roberts released his Gas Plan this week in response to the final report by Professor Mary O'Kane, NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer. After so much hard work by Professor O'Kane and so many serious problems highlighted by the community we expected more from the Minister. What we got was more of the same.

"Minister Roberts re-announced all the previous material from the Government that was supposed to reassure the people of NSW, backed up by the same spurious gas industry propaganda about the burning need to NSW to have its own gas supply." said Mr Hare-Scott

The new announcements purports to adopt all the recommendations of the O'Kane report. As always, the devil will be in the detail with many of the proposed safeguards. The record of the EPA does not give one much hope that they will be given the legal teeth, the resources and the political backing to become an effective and independent regulator.

Minister Roberts continued his unswerving support for AGL stating in state parliament 'However, the dialogue has reshaped the way local communities engage with government and companies in relation to large resources projects. It has transformed our role from absence to informing and genuine engagement.'

This Gloucester Dialogue has been boycotted by the community; it keeps no minutes and can gag any member from speaking out. On his resignation from the Dialogue founding member Councillor Hoggett said, 'This creates an illusion of consultation where in fact none exists. The process has also been completely opaque.'

If the Office of Coal Seam Gas keep calling the shots (as with recent rule changes in favour of AGL) and supporting the gas industry PR deluge then independent environmental regulation in NSW will remain just an ideal and the EPA will continue to be a sad and sorry toothless tiger.

Professor O'Kane noted that that the risks associated with CSG exploration and production can only be managed, 'provided drilling is allowed only in areas where the geology and hydrogeology can be characterised adequately'.

"The Gloucester basin is the most complex geological environment where CSG extraction has been attempted in NSW and it is not comparable to much simpler situations such as Camden. Therefore, you might expect the Minister to tell us that the Gloucester project would be evaluated to see if it complies with that requirement. No such promise was made." said Mr Hare-Scott.

Contact:

David Hare-Scott
02 49947277