

Media Release

24 April 2015

Outrage at AGL's Gloucester CSG incompetence

AGL's new proposal to store contaminated flowback fluid in an open dam 400 metres from Dog Trap Creek which flows into the Avon River is causing outrage in the Gloucester community.

Late last year, AGL fracked four wells by pumping thousands of litres of chemicals and sand into coal seams already containing toxic heavy metals and BTEX chemicals, with no valid plan in place for disposing of the mixture, called 'flowback water', once it is pumped back out.

While the Code of Practice for Coal Seam Gas Fracture Stimulation places a mandatory requirement on AGL to 'describe the reuse, recycling or disposal methods for the flowback water' during planning, Minister Roberts' Office of Coal Seam Gas accepted AGL's vague statement that it would dispose of the fluid to an 'EPA licensed facility'.

After early shipments of AGL's flowback fluid were dumped into the Hunter Water Area, against Hunter Water's instructions, some shipments were taken to the Hawkesbury Water Area and questions remain about the final fate of contaminants in the fluid in both areas.

Gloucester resident, Jenni O'Neill says:

"We've had enough. AGL just doesn't seem to know what they're doing and it's clear that the Government is asleep on the job. They let AGL pump chemicals into the ground, where it mixed with the toxic underground coal seam water, without properly checking that AGL had some way of dealing with it after they pump it back up."

AGL still has no 'EPA licensed facility' available to take the flowback fluid and is now expecting the long-suffering Gloucester and Manning communities to allow the untreated, volatile and toxic fluid to sit in an open dam close to the Avon River, which is used for irrigating beef and dairy farms. There is no telling how long this fluid will be allowed to evaporate near people and animals, in the hope that some solution will be found.

AGL's original application to frack at Waukivory (REF) included a similar plan for storing flowback fluid in an open dam pending removal by water tankers but it was rejected by agencies and AGL in favour of enclosed steel tanks.

"For the sake of Gloucester's beef and dairy industry and for the water in the Manning catchment, we demand that the Government doesn't backflip to help AGL out of a bind of their own making. The increased risk of leaving this toxic fluid in the open is just unacceptable and it's another sign of AGL's contempt for our environment and our existing industries", Julie Lyford, Chair of Groundswell Gloucester, said.

Media enquiries to:

Jeff Kite: 02 6558 7436

Jenni O'Neill: 0432 144 338

Julie Lyford: 0424 269 784