

Media Release

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AGL's Corrosive bacteria nightmare

The detection of corrosive Hydrogen Sulphide in AGL's CSG wells at Gloucester is a nightmare risk for our water supply and our farming community. If well integrity is compromised, new connections could form between fracking fluids, toxic coal seam water and our fresh water supplies.

The presence of Hydrogen Sulphide can cause the corrosion of concrete and steel and fears of early well failure are rising in the Gloucester community. The rate of erosion of AGL's gas wells is hard to predict as it depends on varying temperature, pressure and pH¹.

This new contamination risk follows detections of fracking chemicals and coal seam contaminants in groundwater and surface water, which suggest AGL may already have caused connection between coal seams and the water that flows into the Manning Valley catchment and which is also used for irrigation of beef and dairy crops.

Detections of Hydrogen Sulphide at the well head highlight the air pollution risks for the 50 families living within 2km of the wells and nearby dairy farms.

NSW EPA stated in 2012 that Hydrogen Sulphide is:

“a flammable and acutely toxic gas that is...highly odorous and a nuisance, in low concentrations². “

Groundswell Gloucester raised concerns about potential corrosion through Hydrogen Sulfide back in December 2013³ but AGL's failure to complete the required Environmental Impact Statement meant that full consideration of this community concern never happened.

Julie Lyford, chair of Groundswell Gloucester says:

“We call on Minister Roberts to end AGL's CSG shambles. Why didn't AGL have an acceptable way to deal with the toxic flowback fluid before they started? How long before they can deal with the corrosion issue and how much damage will be done in the meantime?”

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¹For photos by Narrabri resident of suspected corrosion: www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/coal-seam-gas-review/?a=30043

² NSW EPA “Guidelines for the Assessment and Management of Sites Impacted by Hazardous Ground Gases”, 2012, page 2. www.epa.nsw.gov.au/resources/clm/120932GroundGas.pdf

³Groundswell Gloucester, “Exposing the Risks,” December, 2013, Risk Sheet 6.
<http://www.groundswellgloucester.com/resources/downloads/Exposing-the-Risks.pdf>