



AGL'S EXPANSION OF THE CAMDEN GAS PROJECT INTO CAMPBELLTOWN & THE SCENIC HILLS (PROTECTION AREA)

The Camden Gas Project

AGL Energy Limited (AGL) has been extracting coal seam gas (CSG) in the Macarthur region for approximately ten years via its Camden Gas Project (CGP). Up to now it has affected mainly rural areas where distressed landowners have had little support. However, last year AGL applied to the NSW Minister for Planning to expand its operations northwards into Sydney (Stage 3, Northern Expansion) – this time into the Scenic Hills of Campbelltown and Camden (in the Sydney Metropolitan Area), threatening the fragile environment of the Scenic Protection Area, 'sensitive' land uses (schools, churches, monasteries), residential suburbs and Sydney's drinking water.

Proposal for Stage 3 (Northern Expansion) of the CGP

AGL plans to install up to 72 gas extraction wells, gas gathering pipelines, access roads and other **unspecified** 'infrastructure' (in-field compression, central water storage points, storage yards) into the Scenic Protection area. Local planning¹ prohibits *extractive industries* and *mining* in this area, but AGL avoids this by claiming its project is a *public utility undertaking*. This is a doubtful claim. The project features horizontal wells that will run for 2.5 km underground from the well heads, drawing gas from seams in a *subsurface area* encompassing about 26 suburbs: Blair Athol, Blairmount, Bow Bowing, Bradbury, Camden, Campbelltown, Catherine Field, Claymore, Currans Hill, Denham Court, Eagle Vale, Elderslie, Eschol Park, Glen Alpine, Harrington Park, Ingleburn, Kearns, Kirkham, Macquarie Links, Mount Annan, Narellan Vale, Raby, Rosemeadow, St Andrews, Varroville, Woodbine.

AGL initially applied to put a *gas treatment plant* into the Hills as part of Stage 3. The Minister vetoed this after local protest, which included a petition of just over 1000 names raised by the Scenic Hills Association (SHA) and a local newspaper. Curiously, AGL was allowed to apply for the rest of its project even though AGL originally claimed that it could not proceed **without** the gas plant, leading to concerns that the gas plant will be re-instated later.

AGL plans to use existing suburban streets and roads to access a number of its sites – including for industrial machinery (rigs) and trucks carrying chemicals and contaminated waste water associated with its drilling and hydraulic fracturing ('fracking')² operations.

Expert Warnings on CSG mining in Australia

In December 2010, the National Water Commission (NWC) issued a statement warning that the "potential impacts of CSG developments, particularly the cumulative effects of multiple projects are not well understood", noting problems associated with 'fracking', waste water management, water extraction and land subsidence, and "significant social impacts" caused by the disruptive nature of infrastructure construction and access. Similar concerns have been raised overseas.

In April 2011, the National Toxics Network (NTN) called for a moratorium on drilling and 'fracking' chemicals until all chemicals have been fully assessed by the industrial chemicals regulator.

Doctors for the Environment, Australia (DEA) has called for a Health Impact Assessment study to investigate the potential ill health caused by all facets of the industry's operations.

Studies are underway to re-investigate the life-time impact of natural gas production on greenhouse gas emissions, raising the spectre that it may not have the advantage over coal. (David Shearman, DEA, ABC Online, April 11, 2011).

¹ Campbelltown Local Environment Plan – District 8 (Central Hills Lands).

² 'Fracking' is a process used in unconventional gas extraction to release methane gas from the coal or shale seam. The seam is fractured by pumping water, sand and chemicals into the seam under pressure. It is implicated in chemical contamination and depletion of ground and surface water, raising concerns for farming, environmental safety and health.

SHA Objects

After careful evaluation of AGL's project application for Stage 3, in January 2011 SHA lodged an **objection** to the application with the NSW Department of Planning. Our key concerns are:

- AGL's proposal is 'industrialising' the Scenic Hills - violating the zoning and threatening the survival of the Hills.
- AGL plans to use the controversial 'fracking' process to extract gas.
- AGL plans to put wells **on** 'sensitive' land (for churches, schools, monasteries) even though the landholders say it threatens their viability and have refused permission.
- Rich layers of heritage in the Hills are threatened - aboriginal 'places' and artefacts of high sensitivity, "critically endangered" Cumberland Plain Woodland, colonial landscapes and historic estates that shaped the beginnings of the pastoral industry in NSW and Australia.
- AGL plans to run its main gas spine line through the Australian Botanic Garden at Mount Annan (Australia's largest botanic garden), and along Sydney's water canal (Upper Canal), threatening Sydney's water supply and publicly owned state heritage.
- AGL's Environmental Assessment (EA) is inadequate, leaving too many 'unknowns':
 - The EA assumes that there are no 'below ground' risks even though this is the area of greatest concern in CSG mining at the moment;
 - AGL expects to carry out critical site-specific studies **after** approval of its project. This avoids public scrutiny of documents that should be part of the project decision.
 - AGL has **not** adequately monitored environmental impacts in its previous stages of the CGP. This means that key lessons have **not** yet been learnt that could assist in protecting the environment in Stage 3.
 - AGL plans to use the Scenic Hills and its surrounding suburbs as the 'guinea pig' for future developments – at what cost to people living in Sydney's South West? ...to Sydney's water supply?
 - Key elements of the project have not yet been specified leading to concerns that AGL is pursuing a 'foot in the door strategy', setting precedents for later expansion in the Scenic Hills and in the Sydney Metropolitan Area.
- There appears to be no **truly independent** monitoring of CSG mining in NSW to ensure that "conditions of approval" and safety standards are being fully met, making a mockery of the approval process.

If the Minister approves this project we fear it will spell the end of the Scenic Hills as we know them and bring to South West Sydney many of the environmental, health, social and economic problems and risks affecting communities elsewhere in NSW & Queensland.

HELP US PROTECT THE SCENIC HILLS:

1. Become a Friend of SHA (www.scenic hills.org.au) and join in our action.
2. Put a sign on your gate opposing CSG in the Hills and Campbelltown. (You can make your own or buy one from SHA for \$10 each).
3. Email the **Minister for Planning**, the Hon. Brad Hazzard at office@hazzard.minister.nsw.gov.au , or **local MPs**:
 - **Camden**: Chris Patterson P.O. Box 669, Camden 2570, camden@parliament.nsw.gov.au, ph. 46553333.
 - **Macquarie Fields**: Dr Andrew McDonald, Shop 18 Carnes Hill Marketplace Cowpasture Rd, Horningsea Park 2171, macquariefields@parliament.nsw.gov.au, ph. 96088991
 - **Campbelltown**: Bryan Doyle P.O. Box 895, Campbelltown, 2560, campbelltown@parliament.nsw.gov.au, ph. 46253344.
 - **Campbelltown City Council** (Paul Tosi, General Manager), P.O. Box CAMPBELLTOWN 2560, council@campbelltown.nsw.gov.au , ph. 46454000.