

To: Department of Planning and Infrastructure

Opposition to Apex Energy's Gas Exploration Project Mod 3

I am writing to express my opposition to the application by Apex Energy to modify their Development Approval for drilling in the Illawarra. This will extend drilling deadlines to "three years from commencement of drilling of the first bore hole" for 16 wells spanning two drinking water catchments (Woronora and Nepean).

My opposition is based on the following:

1. There is increasing evidence of the potential risks of CSG mining to the natural environment, water supplies and human health. The Premier has acknowledged that the current legislation is not adequate to manage development of the industry. In this context, no new applications or modifications should be approved and existing projects should be frozen, to conduct an investigation into the full impacts of CSG development.
2. The drinking water catchment is unsuitable for CSG exploration and production. Allowing this development to go ahead contradicts the pre-election promise from Barry O'Farrell: "The next Liberal/National Government will ensure that mining cannot occur... in any water catchment area, and will ensure that mining leases and mining exploration permits reflect that common sense; no ifs, no buts, a guarantee."
3. The Illawarra Escarpment is a high risk bush fire area, exacerbated by its highly combustible peat base. Indeed, a bushfire consumed 1600 hectares around Bulli Tops in August 2012, including two of the approved (now lapsed) CSG well sites. CSG mining will increase the likelihood and the potential risks associated with bushfire as a result of additional traffic, the operation of heavy equipment, and the possibility of leaking methane. Leaks come from pipelines, wellheads, processing plants, water drawn out of the coal seam and methane escaping from underground systems due to drilling disturbance.
4. The development of this coal seam gas project is being layered on top of extensive coal mining and a fault line, without an assessment of the combined impacts.
5. There is widespread public opposition to CSG exploration and mining in the area. This includes a public petition of over 30,000 signatures, formal votes against CSG mining by local councils and two actions opposing CSG development attended by over 3,000 people each.

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