

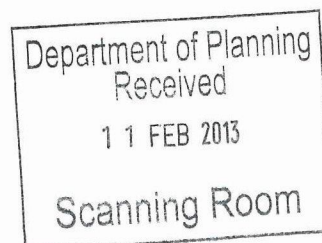


PCU041456

Our Ref: 6740-8805

8<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Mr H. Reed  
Manager Projects Assessment  
Major Projects Assessment  
Dept Planning & infrastructure  
GPO Box 39  
SYDNEY NSW 2001



Dear Mr Reed

**Legislative Council Inquiry into Coal Seam Gas – Wollondilly Shire Council Submission**

Thank you for providing Council with the opportunity to make a submission to the Camden Gas Project (stage 3) north expansion.

Wollondilly Shire Council is concerned the Coal Seam Gas industry may have serious environmental and health impacts on its community. These concerns need to be understood and addressed by the NSW State Government before any further decisions are taken to proceed with the full development of current Coal Seam Gas reserves and the associated infrastructure.

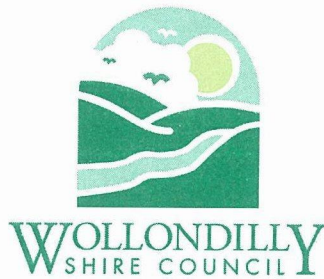
In this submission Wollondilly Shire Council advocates for more robust investigation and research into the potential impacts on ecosystems, agricultural land, human health, waste production and disposal and, in particular, the potential degradation of ground water systems of Coal Seam Gas activities. Council also advocates for more robust approval and legislation and enforced environmental protection and compliance relation to Coal Seam Gas Activity.

Council in its submission makes recommendations to the Plans Assessment Commission and raises concerns and comments in regards to Coal Seam Gas activities. Council looks forward to receiving the outcomes of this Assessment Process.

If you require any further information or have enquiries regarding aspects of Council's submission please contact Brad Staggs, Council's Manager of Environmental Services on (02) 4677 1129

Yours sincerely

**Luke Johnson**  
**Acting General Manager**



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# **Submission on the Camden Gas Project – Northern Expansion (Stage 3) Wollondilly Shire Council**

**6<sup>th</sup> February 2013**

## **Executive Summary**

- Wollondilly Shire Council objects to any expansion of the Coal Seam Gas (CSG) industry generally until appropriate knowledge, processes and management of the environmental and social impacts are adequately understood.
- Wollondilly Shire Council objects to the application for the Camden Gas Project-Northern Expansion (Stage 3) in its current form.
- Specific issues of this objection include
  - Aquifer Interference
  - Surface and Groundwater Quality
  - Fugitive Emissions
  - Waste Management
  - Community Impacts and Objections
  - Public Health
- Wollondilly Shire Council supports the Submissions from Camden, Campbelltown and Liverpool Councils.

## **Background**

Wollondilly Shire covers approximately 2500 square kilometres, around 65% of that land as National Park or Water Catchment Special Areas including areas within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. It has a population of around 45,000 people. It supplies a great deal of the Sydney's fresh produce including fruit, vegetables, dairy, poultry and beef. It also produces many horticultural products including turf, nursery stock and mushrooms. It provides the drinking water for almost 1.5 million people through its waterways and is home to 86 Threatened species and 8 Threatened Ecological Communities and acts as an important complex of wildlife corridors.

Wollondilly is experiencing, and will continue to experience development pressures, given its position on the outskirts of Sydney. These pressures are primarily urban development and mining activities.

Wollondilly Shire is within the Macarthur District, along with Camden and Campbelltown Local Government Areas. This regional connection has resulted in strong relationships between the three Councils. Given the commonality of issues and the interactions between our communities, the Macarthur Councils actively support each other on issues beyond our own boundaries.

In 2010 the Community of Wollondilly Shire endorsed its Community Strategic Plan. This Plan addresses the five areas of Environment, Community, Governance, Economy and Infrastructure and reflects the community hopes (Outcomes) for the Shire for the next 30

years. Of particular interest for this submission is the Communities desired Outcomes for the Environment, these are:

- *A community that is surrounded by a built and natural environment that is valued and preserved*
- *A community that has opportunity to engage with and actively care about their natural environment*

Council must ensure that these outcomes are the aim of its activities as such this submission is compatible with achieving those outcomes.

Wollondilly Shire has hosted mining and extractive industries for decades and the proceeds of that have been important to both the Federal and State levels of Government but also at the local community level in terms of employment but not to Local Government level. During this time the potential effects and concerns of Coal Seam Gas (CSG) activity on the environment was underrepresented but recently issues, not previously raised, are becoming apparent.

As a consequence Wollondilly Shire Council is concerned the CSG industry may have serious environmental and health impacts on its community. These concerns need to be understood and addressed by the NSW State Government before any further decisions are taken to proceed with the full development of current CSG reserves and the associated infrastructure.

Wollondilly Shire Council advocates for more robust investigation and research into the potential impacts on ecosystems, agricultural lands, human health, waste production and disposal and, in particular, the potential degradation of ground water systems by CSG activities. Council also advocates for a more robust approval and legislation also enforced environmental protection and compliance relating to CSG activity.

Wollondilly Council at it Ordinary Meeting of 21 /11/2011 unanimously resolved

*"That the following submission of recommendations be made to the Legislative Council Inquiry into Coal Seam Gas"*

*Wollondilly Shire Council recommends that The NSW Government should:*

- 1. Impose an immediate moratorium on all further Coal Seam Gas development until it can be demonstrated that the industry will not have any unacceptable social and environmental impacts.*
- 2. Implement a robust, transparent and independent assessment of the environmental impacts of Coal Seam Gas extraction*
- 3. Establish an Assessment Commission to undertake this independent assessment.*
- 4. Investigate the impact of the levels of water extraction on the aquifers, surface waters and their connectivity and the security of the water resource for both consumptive and environmental purposes in the short, medium and long term.*
- 5. Investigate concerns about the use and disposal of salt and other materials contained within coal seam gas generated waste and waste water and develop systems to ensure its reduction, treatment and disposal compliance.*



6. *Develop robust regulations for the Coal Seam Gas industry ensuring parity to Local Government Planning controls and other environmental regulations, including State controls, placed on landholders and the community including water access rights.*

CSG activity has occurred in Wollondilly for over 11 years, as long as the industry has existed in NSW. This industry established in Wollondilly without the understanding of the potential impacts on both the environment and socially. Council was virtually relegated to an observer rather than a participant in the planning, approval and operating processes of the CSG industry in Wollondilly. Primary issues raised during this period focussed on visual and noise impacts with land access also a concern. Since that time more is understood about the hidden environmental and social impacts of CSG exploration and extraction. Council is concerned that any environmental damage or social upheaval caused by the industry in Wollondilly over the past 11 years has never been assessed.

### **Wollondilly Shire Councils position on CSG**

Council has developed a strong position on CSG and this is reflected in resolutions passed by Council.

The primary position of Council is that a moratorium should be placed on CSG activity. This is reflected in the following resolution:

***“That Council write to our State Member asking for in Wollondilly a moratorium on Coal Seam Gas exploration and extraction and the ceasing of any activity relating to this process until further evidence is provided to completely rule out any environmental impact”*** March 2012

Given indications by the NSW Government that the CSG industry will continue, Council advocates for a strong, legislative and appropriate consultative and assessment process for exploration and extraction and one which includes the community and Councils approval and endorsement. This is reflected in the following resolutions:

***“That Council write to the relevant ministers seeking to change legislation to ensure that any new coal seam gas exploratory applications must be approved by means of a council development application. Furthermore this motion be included at the next Local Government Conference”*** March 2012

and

***“Wollondilly Shire Council recommends that the NSW Government should:***

- 1. Impose an immediate moratorium on all further Coal Seam Gas development until it can be demonstrated that the industry will not have any unacceptable social and environmental impacts.***
- 2. Implement a robust, transparent and independent assessment of the environmental impacts of Coal Seam Gas extraction.***
- 3. Establish an Assessment Commission to undertake this independent assessment.***

**4. Develop robust regulations for the Coal Seam Gas industry ensuring parity to Local Government Planning controls and other environmental regulations, including State controls, placed on landholders and the community including water” Nov 2011**

The lack of information provided to Councils regarding CSG exploration and extraction is reflected in the following Council resolution:

**“That the State Government are written to requesting information of all exploration licences for coal seam gas in Wollondilly including their conditions and expiry date. That following receipt of this information that Council write to all licence holders and detail our expectations in regard to consultation with residents and Council” March 2012**

Other resolutions passed by Council, which indicate Councils position on CSG exploration include:

**“That the Federal Government are written to regarding a right of an individual to shut the gate on their property in regards to resources and choose whether or not to allow entry to anybody or organisation” March 2012**

**1. “That Council write to our State Member asking for a moratorium on Coal Seam Gas exploration and extraction in Wollondilly and the ceasing of any activity relating to this process until further evidence is provided to completely rule out any environmental impact.” Nov 2011**

**2 “That the following submission of recommendations be made to the Legislative Council Inquiry into Coal Seam Gas.” Nov 2011**

**3.” Investigate the impact of the levels of water extraction on the aquifers, surface waters and their connectivity and the security of the water resource for both consumptive and environmental purposes in the short, medium and long term.” Nov 2011**

**4.” Investigate concerns about the use and disposal of salt and other materials contained within coal seam gas generated waste and waste water and develop systems to ensure its reduction, treatment and disposal compliance.” Nov 2011**

and

**“That a report come to a future Council meeting regarding the occurrence of existing and planned coal seam gas exploration and extraction within Wollondilly Shire. The report is to include information on the locations, method and status (exploration or extraction) of coal seam gas operations and Councils role in managing and/or regulating these developments. Depending on the outcome of this information Council look at holding public meetings.**

and



***“ That Council be proactive in its response to CSG exploration and extraction licence applications in the Shire.”*** April 2012

***“That council comment on the Draft CSG Exploration guidelines and Draft Aquifer Interference Policy.”*** April 2012

***“That council continue to lobby the State and Federal Governments to give communities and Local Government a more appropriate role in the consultation, assessment and possible approvals of CSG operations in their areas.”*** April 2012

***“That Council extend an invitation to the surrounding local Councils of Campbelltown, Camden, Wollongong and Wingecarribee to become a regional voice in the advocacy role in understanding and commenting on CSG within the area.”*** April 2012

And

***“That Council propose a special community forum to discuss the impact of CSG on the Shire, especially in the drinking water catchment. That this forum be videotaped”***  
Oct 2012

## **Comments on the Proposal**

Although this proposal is not within the Wollondilly Local Government Area directly, Council is a significant stakeholder in the outcome of the application. Significant because:

- the proposal is an extension of existing CSG operations currently within Wollondilly.
- the proposal has the potential to have environmental impact across local government boundaries.
- the proposal has the potential to have social impacts across local government boundaries.
- Wollondilly is part of the bioregion targeted for this proposal.
- Wollondilly Council and the Wollondilly community have a position of objecting to CSG activity until the industry impacts are fully understood.

## **Wollondilly Council Specific Concerns**

### **Aquifer interference**

Wollondilly Shire has been adversely effected by aquifer interference from mining operations over many years. Issues such as the loss of water from Thirlmere Lakes is the most recent example where the interference of ground water systems has potentially caused the emptying of the Lakes. Many businesses and residents rely on bores for their water supply and anecdotal evidence indicates a loss of water in bores in areas formally or currently being mined. Wollondilly was active in the calling for and development of the NSW aquifer Interference Policy given these experiences. Council considers that better understanding of the relationships of the various ground water and aquifer systems is needed before risks are taken with their integrity and health.



Recommendation 1: That the application must comply with the requirements of the *Aquifer interference Policy and Code of Practice for Hydraulic Fracturing Stimulation* and *Code of Practice for Hydraulic Fracturing and Well Integrity*.

Recommendation 2: That the Planning Assessment commission (PAC) investigate the accuracy of the predicted dewatering volumes and resolve the risks posed to groundwater environments by this proposal and that this investigation consider the need for a more comprehensive ground water study prior to the proposal assessment.

Recommendation 3: That items raised in the *Water Research Laboratories Peer Review of Camden Gas Project Groundwater Investigations*, commissioned by Campbelltown City Council, be considered by the PAC.

### **Surface and Groundwater Quality**

Being a central part of the provision of Sydney's drinking water and having a community who needs and appreciates healthy waterways, Wollondilly Council has always advocated for the protection of ground and surface waters. Council is not convinced that the Camden Stage 3 proposal adequately understands the hydrology of the immediate or extended areas proposed to be worked. Wollondilly has suffered the loss of waters from a number of its creeks and rivers as a result of poor understanding and poor management of the waterways by mining interests. This disruption has resulted in altered or reduced water flows, contamination and loss of biodiversity. Council is also concerned regarding the contamination of surface water caused by flooding of the well sites. Recent flooding of the Nepean River and gas wells MP25 and MP16 has highlighted the inadequate monitoring of rainfall and potential flooding and response to incidents once they occur. This most recent event at Menangle Park has raised concerns from residents and Councils that a contamination event may have occurred in the Nepean River.

Recommendation 4: That any approval must stipulate that any hydraulic fracture stimulation be conducted in accordance with the *Coal Seam Gas Code of Practice for Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation and Well Construction* and operations conducted in accordance with the *Coal Seam Gas Code of Practice for Well Integrity*.

Recommendation 5: That the proponent provide detailed information about handling and storage of chemicals at the surface sites that demonstrates adequate measures to prevent water and land pollution from these sites and that this contain information on preventative monitoring.

Recommendation 6: That the proponent prepare a *Ground Water Monitoring Plan*

Recommendation 7: That the proponent provide specific information on all watercourses impacted by pipeline crossings, operations and infrastructure.

### **Fugitive Emissions**

Council is concerned at the inadequate monitoring of fugitive emissions from existing wells and that this inadequacy is reflected in this proposal. The release of fugitive emissions (including methane) can occur beyond the immediate area of the wells yet monitoring is primarily limited to the well areas and the frequency of monitoring is inadequate. AGL has indicated that it will increase its monitoring but this should be mandated within any approval granted.

Recommendation 8: That a condition be placed on any approval which requires the implementation of all environmental management and mitigation measures for air emissions specified in the EPL and that a pollution reduction plan be part of that requirement.



Recommendation 9: That the proponent provide a detailed assessment of fugitive emissions not restricted to gas extraction well sites.

### **Waste Management**

Council is yet to be convinced that the waste products produced by the CSG industry are controlled and managed appropriately. The capturing, storing, transporting and disposal of the waste products (which include unspecified chemicals and compounds) is a disjointed process which increases the risk of waste material being released into the environment. Recent flooding of the MP25 and MP16 wells along the Nepean River displays the fragility of managing waste products from CSG operations. In this instance a detention basin and well head were inundated by river water giving rise to speculation (be it correct or not) that waste products from the activity may have entered the river.

Recommendation 10: That a waste monitoring and management plan be developed specifically for this project and this plan to include measures which reduces the production, decanting, exposure, storage, transportation and disposal risks associated with the proposal.

### **Community Impacts and Objections**

Wollondilly is experiencing a growing objection from the community to the CSG industry in the Shire but also generally. This has been reflected by the formation of a proactive community group, a number of Council resolutions supporting these community objections and the declaration of Nattai as a "CSG free community". These objections are based on the impacts the community have experienced or fear they could experience, such as loss of access control on their properties, potential health impacts, potential devaluation of property, impacts on road infrastructures and access to clean water. The community regard Council as their representatives therefore Council must reflect their concerns and does.

Recommendation 11: That the proponent to include an assessment of all the direct and indirect impacts associated with the installation and operations of gas wells and gathering lines on the community.

Recommendation 12: That the development not occur in proximity to existing or proposed residential areas.

Recommendation 13: That the proponent evaluate potential impacts on private and public infrastructure, including the impacts of horizontal drilling, and prepare a compensation management plan for the proposal.

### **Public Health**

Council is concerned at the lack of knowledge regarding the health impacts of the CSG industry. Fugitive emissions and water contamination being the primary concerns for the community but Council is also aware of other health impacts including conditions relating to stress. This stress can be triggered by the uncertainty of other health impacts on themselves, the distress of losing control over access to their property and the worry of damage to property including homes. Council is concerned that there has not been a adequate assessment of the effects of CSG may have on the community's health.

Recommendation 14: That the proponent undertake an Environmental Health Risk Assessment prior to any approvals being granted.

### **Issues Raised by other Submissions**

Council has reviewed other submissions on this proposal, in particular those of surrounding Councils, the community and government agencies and supports particular aspects of those submissions. Council understands that these submissions reflect the local knowledge and experiences of the respective authors and as such Wollondilly Shire Council supports the submissions of Camden, Campbelltown and Liverpool Councils.

### **Conclusion**

Wollondilly Council does not support this application in particular nor the CSG industry generally. Council considers the application inadequate, questions the processes of assessment and approvals and is particularly concerned that this expansion proposal could indicate an even more significant growth of the industry in Macarthur.

Should you require any further information or clarification on this submission please contact Mr Brad Staggs, Manager Environmental Services on 46 771129 or at [brad.staggs@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au](mailto:brad.staggs@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au)