



Campbelltown Public Forum on Coal Seam Gas Mining

A Public Forum was held on Saturday June 25th to discuss concerns about Coal Seam Gas Mining in the Camden Area and AGL's proposal to extend the Camden Gas Project (CGP) into the Scenic Hills of Campbelltown and Camden (in the Sydney Metropolitan Area). The Forum was convened for the local community by Greens MLC Jeremy Buckingham. Highlights from the meeting were:

- Jeremy Buckingham introduced the meeting and the speakers. A short documentary video showing other community forums and interviews was played.
- Dr. Andrew McDonald, (MP for Macquarie Fields and Shadow Minister for Health - half the Scenic Hills of Campbelltown are in his electorate which includes half the Northern Expansion of the Camden Gas Project)
 - Admitted he originally supported the Northern Expansion into the Scenic Hills but no longer does, saying 'things have changed'. (Previously he only opposed the gas treatment plant).
 - Said he thought a case could be made to exclude the Scenic Hills from CSG Mining.
 - Said the burden of proof should be on CSG industry to prove that it can operate safely and 'do no harm', saying it should not be up to the community to prove it is unsafe [as now].
 - There was limited time for questions as Dr McDonald had to go to another appointment.
 - **Note January 2012: SHA has since welcomed the decision of the NSW Shadow Cabinet to support a moratorium on Coal Seam Gas mining in NSW, and is grateful for Dr. McDonald's assistance in putting Questions on Notice to NSW Ministers responsible for coal seam gas regulation.**
- Dr. Helen Redmond from Doctors for the Environment (DEA) – see: <http://dea.org.au/>
 - Talked about the range of health problems for humans and animals from CSG mining
 - Said there is insufficient medical research
 - Said the DEA is calling for a **moratorium** on the CSG Industry so that the health impacts can be properly assessed.
 - **The question for the community now is "With all the health problems from existing Sydney pollution, can Campbelltown afford to have heavy industry operating in the middle of the built up area (Sydney Metropolitan Area) when the industry has not yet been proved safe for humans and animals?"**
- Mike Moraza, Group General Manager for AGL Upstream Gas,
 - Defended AGL's 10 years of operating in the Camden area saying that AGL had a good record of working with the community and took issue with some of the points made in the video.
 - Said that the Camden Gas Project supplied up to 6% of NSW's natural gas.
 - Gave assurances about the safety of AGL's operations.
 - Said he did not agree with the idea of a moratorium as he believed it would close the industry down and key staff would move to Queensland (receiving applause from AGL employees present at the meeting).
 - Would not agree to withdraw AGL's plans to extend into the Scenic Hills and Sydney Metropolitan Area, saying he wanted instead to work with the community to reach agreement on where to put the wells and other industrial infrastructure.
- Jacqui Kirkby (Scenic Hills Association)
 - Said CSG mining (as heavy industry) was incompatible with land use in the Scenic Hills and threatened its survival, referring to the fragile environment of the Hills: small rural allotments, religious communities, schools, churches, critically endangered Cumberland Plain Woodland.
 - Said AGL intended putting a cluster of six wells and associated infrastructure on the Serbian Orthodox Diocese land even though the Diocese had told the Department of Planning (DoP) that it could not go ahead with its plans for its school and church if AGL did this.
 - Said AGL would use St Andrews road for access for its industrial rigs and trucks carrying chemicals and contaminated waste water [passing Mount Carmel High School, the Mount Carmel Church, the Carmelite Retreat Centre and the Carmelite Monastery]. Likewise AGL proposed using residential streets in the Eschol Park/Eagle Vale area for the same.

- Said, since December 2010, numerous Experts had put out warnings and calls for a moratorium on the CSG mining industry so that further investigations could be made into its safety:
 - National Water Commission - warnings
 - National Toxics Network - moratorium
 - Doctors for the Environment - moratorium
 - University Academics (Professors of Agriculture, Law at Sydney and Queensland Universities) - moratorium
 - NSW Farmers Association - moratorium
 - 'Fracking' banned in France, moratoriums elsewhere (UK, various states in USA)
- Warned that the South West could be a loser under the NSW Government's Strategic Land Use policy that would carve NSW up into mining and no-mining areas - said the policy was 'morally indefensible' when there are so many unknowns and the industry has not proven that it can operate safely and economically at the same time.
- Accused AGL of constantly changing its explanation for what happened at the Menangle well 'blow out' in May - said SHA didn't believe it's explanation that no harm was done to the environment (photos showed grass was dead or discoloured) and that we can never know for sure as the EPA wasn't notified for 2 days.
- Said SHA didn't accept AGL assurances [about its operational safety] when:
 - it was likely it is in breach of its "conditions of approval" and its Petroleum Production Leases by not conducting scientifically valid ground water monitoring in 10 years of operating the Camden Gas Project
 - AGL (like the whole CSG mining industry) is allowed to self-monitor, self-report...thereby effectively self-regulating [i.e. we have to take their word for their safety]
 - AGL had admitted (in the AGL Community Consultative Committee meeting of June 16th) that it only reported the Menangle incident because it had been caught on camera and worried about community response, but it didn't think it had done anything wrong - yet the EPA said that it DID do the wrong thing.
- Said that Mike Moraza misled the meeting when he suggested that gas companies can't get access to landholder's land without their permission. She said that landholders are obliged legally to negotiate an access agreement with gas companies and ultimately can't stop gas companies accessing their land [gas companies can take landholders to the Land and Environment Court to enforce access if they won't negotiate.]
- Called for a moratorium on approvals of ALL NEW PROJECTS (including the expansion of existing projects, not just exploration) so that an independent enquiry can establish a FACT base
- Fr. Greg Burke (Catholic Priest and Carmelite Friar from Varroville in the Scenic Hills) asked Mike Moraza whether any land use was 'off limits' for AGL: schools, churches, monasteries... Mr Moraza would not exclude these just reiterating that he wanted to work with landholders to find the best place to put wells and infrastructure on their land.
- Martin Robinson from Bow Bowing asked why AGL proposed expanding the CGP into the Scenic Hills knowing it was an environmentally sensitive area and should we assume AGL would do this in the National Park. Mr Moraza said AGL would definitely not put wells in the National Park but would not say why he didn't have the same respect for the Campbelltown 's Scenic Hills, indicating that he simply wanted to work with us to find the best places to put the wells and [industrial] infrastructure into the Hills.
- Councillor Fred Borg (Independent, Campbelltown City Council) attended the meeting to support the community and hear people's concerns. He received applause from the audience when his attendance was announced as he has been a long term supporter of the Scenic Hills.
- Jeremy Buckingham MLC concluded the meeting by announcing that the Greens were introducing a bill into Parliament calling for a 12 month moratorium on CSG mining and a prohibition of CSG mining in the Sydney Metropolitan Area (which includes the Northern Expansion of the Camden Gas Project).
- Both Bryan Doyle (MP Campbelltown) and Campbelltown City Council were invited to speak at the meeting but officially declined. **[Note: Bryan Doyle subsequently attended our first Public Information meeting on October 29th 2011 and took questions from the audience on the issue. He has supported SHA's right to inform the local community through our public presentations.]**