



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Campbelltown loses Right to appeal CSG expansion into Sydney Metropolitan Area (Camden Gas Project Stage 3 Northern Expansion).**

The NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure (DoPI) sent letters to Campbelltown and Camden community representatives late Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> November informing them that *the first coal seam gas production development application* under the NSW Liberal-National Government was being transferred from Part 3A to the Government's new State Significant Development (SSD) legislation, and had been referred to the Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) for a merit review with public hearings - wiping out the rights of the Campbelltown and Camden urban communities to legally challenge any decision on its merits in the courts... as would have been the case under the previous Labor Government's Part 3A legislation.

"The O'Farrell Government promised to get rid of the unpopular Part 3A planning legislation with its abuse of democratic process, but nothing has changed except the name.

"Our right to legally appeal the merits of this determination in the Land & Environment Court has been taken away by the Minister's decision. This would have applied if it had remained under Part 3A and the Minister had similarly referred it to the PAC. In other words, nothing's changed. The PAC will both review it and decide it - a body set up under the last government, made up of un-elected, non-bureaucrats, appointed by the Minister on advice...They will play judge and jury and we have no democratic right to have this [the quality of the decision] reviewed by the normal process of law, and no political appeal. This means *less* scrutiny, not *more* as claimed in the joint media releases of the NSW Department of Planning & Infrastructure and AGL."

The community was taken by surprise at the decision, giving people only six weeks from today to make a submission for consideration by the PAC. Many of the affected landowners are religious communities caught up in activities in the lead up to Christmas.

"It's a cynical move that will set precedents for the exploitation of CSG resources and fracking under Sydney's suburbs. The danger of this being approved without the independent scrutiny of the courts can't be underestimated. Stage 3 will feature an untried clustering of up to six wells per site that will then run horizontally for up to 2.5 kms from their well heads under the surrounding suburbs. AGL won't deny that it might frack any or all of these wells in the future as the technology evolves. Yet we don't even know if it's safe in its current form. Minister Hartcher lifted the ban on fracking in September without releasing the long awaited report of the Chief Scientist into fracking and well integrity, leaving many unknowns about the process."

"The 150,000 affected residents of South West Sydney are being turned into human guinea pigs, and the risks don't end there. The local population is expected to grow to 500,000 in the South West Growth Centre where this field is being developed, and there are unknown and unpredictable impacts on aquifers that 'probably run into Sydney Harbour' (according to AGL). AGL merely *hopes* to supply 5% of NSW's gas from Stage 3, with no guarantees."

"The NSW Government and AGL clearly do not want the courts anywhere near this decision and all NSW residents should take note."

**Authorised by Jacqui Kirkby (0411873999) and Fr. Greg Burke (0421158067) on behalf of the Scenic Hills Association 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012. Refer: [www.scenichills.org.au](http://www.scenichills.org.au).**