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Clearing the way for CSG development in catchments?

The Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson, has replaced the entire board of the Sydney Catchment Authority, the agency responsible for protecting the drinking water of two-thirds of people in NSW. The new chairperson – Mark Bethwaite – is a former director of two of Australia’s largest mining companies, and for the first time in its history there is no public health expert on the board. And this is happening in the context of coal seam gas (CSG) licences being granted over drinking water catchments, including two in the Illawarra. Stop CSG Illawarra spokesperson, Jess Moore, commented:

“Hodgkinson’s decision is a huge concern.

“Is the Government clearing the way for CSG development in catchments?

“The NSW Government has failed to rule out CSG development in drinking water catchments, despite a pre-election promise from O’Farrell to ban it. In fact, they have approved CSG wells there.

“Now the agency responsible for protecting the drinking water of two-thirds of people in NSW has no public health expert and a chairman who is a former director of two of Australia’s largest mining companies.

“This is yet another sign that the NSW Government is failing to put the protection of drinking water first.

“How can it possibly be acceptable that the authority charged with protecting our drinking water - for the purpose of public health - has not one public health expert, but is headed up by a former mining executive?

“Drinking water and public health is more important than CSG development.

“There should be a public health expert on the SCA Board, and CSG development should be ruled out in drinking water catchments.

“Protecting public health should remain core business of the Sydney Catchment Authority.”

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