



Stop CSG Illawarra
PO Box 5022, Wollongong NSW 2520
Phone: Jess Moore 0416 232 349
www.stop-csg-illawarra.org
info@stop-csg-illawarra.org

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NSW Government revives CSG plan in catchments

The Department of Planning and Infrastructure has recommended approval of Apex Energy's modification application that will allow them to drill 16 coal seam gas (CSG) wells in and around the Woronora and Upper Nepean drinking water catchments. Apex Energy has also been sent a renewal offer for a lapsed exploration licence – PEL 442 – that extends from Scarborough in the north to Dapto in the south. Stop CSG Illawarra spokesperson Jess Moore commented:

"This is grave news for all in NSW who get their water from the Sydney Water Catchment.

"It flies in the face of the Premiers' pre-election promise to rule out mining in the catchment.

"Eleven of the sixteen wells are in areas so protected that I can be fined up to \$44,000 for walking there.

"How can the Government allow the risks of CSG development into the very areas set up to protect drinking water?

"CSG exploration and mining always involves unearthing water that is high in salt and methane, and can contain toxic and radioactive compounds and heavy metals.

"The risks are not theoretical; heavy metals and toxins have contaminated soil and water, CSG sites have leaked methane and fracking chemicals have spewed into the air.

This news follows the announcement earlier this week that the entire board of the Sydney Catchment Authority – the agency responsible for protecting the drinking water of two-thirds of people in NSW – has been overhauled. The new chairperson 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.

"The Government seems hell bent on developing CSG in the drinking water catchment, regardless of risk or level of community opposition.

"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?

"It is both deeply disturbing and revolting that we have to fight our Government to have our drinking water protected.

"Regardless of this Government recommendation, and whatever the PAC decides, this community will not let CSG development in the drinking water catchment go ahead."

Media enquiries: Jess Moore 0416 232 349 or Chris Williams 0425 329 963