

Stop CSG Illawarra launched

Media release: 17th March, 2011

Over 100 people turned up for the first organising meeting of *Stop CSG Illawarra* on Sunday, March 13. At an Illawarra screening of Gasland on Saturday, March 5, concerned community members decided to set up the new group, calling the inaugural meeting for the following weekend.

The revelation that the Keneally government gave the go-ahead to CSG mines in the Illawarra has outraged many. Fifteen CSG wells were recently approved for development in the Northern Illawarra under Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and APEX has an additional well application currently before the NSW Department of Planning. These wells are in and around the Sydney Water Catchment, and pose a direct threat to our water supply.

Spokesperson Jess Moore stated: "The group decided to campaign locally for: a Royal Commission into all impacts of CSG mining; a moratorium on CSG mining until the outcome of the Royal Commission; and a ban on fracking.

"A wide range of strategies were discussed, and the group agreed to kick off with an information campaign, acknowledging that most in the region still do not know what CSG mining is or that it is happening here.

"Indeed, apart from some Darkes Forest land owners, whose approval on leases was required, the community was not consulted or even contacted about local approvals.

"Our concerns include possible physical damage to the environment, groundwater loss, groundwater and surface contamination, toxic chemical use, health impacts, untreatable 'produced water', leaky wells, increased risk of bush fires and gas explosions; many of which pose a high risk to residents, farmers and industry workers.

"The government has put mining industry profits ahead of the needs of community, and the environment. Opposition from the community is the only thing that will turn this around."

Peter Turner, also a Stop CSG Illawarra spokesperson, added: "An Apex document from August 2010 shows preliminary 'desktop' proposals for 26 bores in 7 zones around the Metropolitan Mine workings.

"Gas mining in the area may well compound the damaging impact of longwall mining being carried out under the Woronora catchment, and an inquiry should include a rigorous and conservative assessment of this possibility. As Planning Minister Kristina Keneally was the minister responsible when the gas and coal mine expansion proposals were both separately approved in 2009."

The next meeting of Stop CSG Illawarra is scheduled for Sunday, March 27.

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