



Stop CSG Illawarra
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Illawarra CSG project frozen

After weeks of enquiries and confusion around the status of the Illawarra coal seam gas (CSG) project, Stop CSG Illawarra has finally received a clear statement from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure: drilling cannot happen at this time. Development consent for all CSG wells in the Illawarra – approval to drill and run them – is now invalid.

Fifteen wells were approved for development in 2009, a determination modified to include a sixteenth well in 2011. However, the determination states that drilling and operation of the wells must take place before the expiry of one of two relevant licences, unless the director-general of the planning department steps in. [1] The two relevant licences – PEL 442 and PEL 444 – expired in February and April this year, and PEL 442 has lapsed. Stop CSG Illawarra spokesperson Jess Moore stated:

"The campaign has delayed drilling and development approval on the local project is now invalid.

"This is the result of the extraordinary and tireless efforts of so many in the Illawarra community.

"This marks a serious setback to the local project. It puts a freeze on the immediate threat of CSG development to the Nepean and Woronora drinking water catchments.

"The Apex / Ormil joint venture must now apply for a modification to the project, and the Government will need to grant them both this *and* a new licence, to get the project up and running again.

"What the Government does now is an huge test. Will they reinstate the project in the face of enormous risk and community opposition?

"The fact is, the Government still supports CSG development and fracking. The legislation still permits CSG exploration and mining in the drinking water catchment.

"The campaign to protect land and water – to put science before development – will continue.

"The campaign to have O'Farell keep his promise and ban CSG development in drinking water catchments will continue."

There are still a number of current CSG licences in the Illawarra, though no valid approved development at this time. Two new licences have been applied for over Wollongong. [2] Both cover the same area as PEL 442, and take in parts of the drinking water catchment. Apex Energy has applied for Petroleum Exploration Licence 138. The NSW Aboriginal Land Council has applied for Petroleum Special Prospecting Authority 58, despite strong objections from the Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council. [3]

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[1] <https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com/public/65ab6b8a00f8e0892033e31e923f16ef/Project%20Approval.pdf>

[2] <http://www.resources.nsw.gov.au/titles/status-reports/Petroleum-TitlesCurrent2012-06.pdf>

[3] <http://www.illawarramercury.com.au/news/local/news/general/sneaky-move-by-aboriginal-land-council-to-mine-gong/2573327.aspx>

