

Gas plan fuels

study plea

By MELISSA LYONS

HUNTER Valley Protection Alliance has taken its plea for a full environmental study of the Broke-Bulga region to Lands Minister Tony Kelly, following its rejection from Mineral Resources Minister Ian MacDonald.

The group has proposed the State Government conduct an extensive study of all current, future and cumulative effects of industry across the region ahead of further development.

Future industry projects include



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Hunter Valley Protection Alliance deputy chairman Graeme Gibson on Minister for Mineral Resources Ian MacDonald, left

AGL's proposed methane gas exploration in the Hunter Bulga coal bed.

Mineral Resources Minister Ian MacDonald, who is assessing the gas

exploration project, met with Hunter Valley Protection Alliance last month to discuss the group's proposal.

Alliance deputy chairman

Graeme Gibson said Mr MacDonald dismissed the proposal and accused its proponents of being "anti-development".

"He has aided and abetted the sacrifice of the agriculture, horticulture, viticulture and beauty of the Hunter Valley to the fossil fuel industry," Mr Gibson said.

Mr MacDonald said Mr Gibson's comments were "over the top and inappropriate".

"I am the Minister for Mineral Resources, not the Minister for Planning," he said.

Mr MacDonald said all new min-

ing proposals submitted to the Department of Planning would require approval under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, which would require a transparent and thorough assessment of all relevant issues.

The Hunter Valley Protection Alliance has redirected its calls to Planning Minister Tony Kelly, sending a written submission to Mr Kelly's office and requesting a meeting with him.

A spokesman from Mr Kelly's office said the minister had received the submission and would consider it.