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Media Release

POLLUTION INCIDENT BY AGL ENERGY IN THE HUNTER VALLEY – WHITEWASH BY THE GOVERNMENT – COMMUNITY PROTEST.

AGL ENERGY has deliberately and intentionally pumped hundreds of thousands of litres of highly saline water onto pasture adjacent to the Wollombi Brook in the Hunter Valley to avoid trucking it away to a treatment plant, according to a report made to the Department of the Environment and the Department of Industry & Investment.

This blatant disrespect for both the environment and the community means quality agricultural land has been contaminated in AGL's quest for coal seam methane gas and, possibly, the Wollombi Brook and the Hunter River itself.

Site photographs show the flooded pasture, the pumping equipment and the dying vegetation. AGL's reaction to these allegations has been to bury the evidence by having the pasture quickly plowed under.

Independent analysis of the contaminated water shows it to be "Class 6 Extremely High Salinity – not suitable for irrigation."

The Department of Industry & Investment verbally indicates they are willing to accept AGL ENERGY's explanation that it had pumped 120,000 litres of "brackish" water onto pasture; that AGL ENERGY "knew they shouldn't have done it"; that AGL ENERGY "recognized that they have done the wrong thing" and that AGL ENERGY's plowing up the evidence is their form of remediation.

The Department, in accepting AGL's explanation, refused to interview the eye witnesses, refused to obtain soil samples, refused to undertake its own water tests. The Government was asked to take the allegations seriously and investigate them thoroughly and objectively with a view to protection the environment. To date the Government has not done that. It smacks of a total whitewash by a Government which is both regulator of the industry and beneficiary of the eventual royalties from the same industry.

AGL did not deny the allegation, merely stating the "allegations are unsubstantiated and unproven." The evidence, the water analysis, and the dead pasture both substantiate and prove the allegations. AGL's hurried attempts to bury the evidence further put claim to the allegations. The residents of the Hunter Valley are calling for a full and urgent investigation into the allegation.

Community protests are scheduled against AGL at the Broke Village Fair Sunday September 12th, attended by about 10,000 people annually.