

GAS WATCH 178.

Tell the State Government to protect agricultural land from coal and gas mining.

The O'Farrell State Government has released its final public consultation draft of its Strategic Land Use Policies in the form of an amendment to the State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP), and its not good news at all for the food bowls and the fresh water of Australia.

Overall there is still no adequate protection of Strategic Agricultural Land (SAL), and there is no certainty for landholders or business operators within those areas. As a result, there is no incentive for sustainable growth of the agricultural industry within SAL. The SEPP must be expanded to enable the new "Gateway Panel", appointed to examine applications to mine coal seam methane, to refuse an application if there are circumstances which could not be addressed by conditions attached to an approval.

Further the SEPP must be expanded to enable the Gateway Panel to take into account impacts of the proposed coal seam methane development on commercial operations, productivity, value, reputation and growth of critical industry clusters within the agricultural community, in addition to the scientific and environmental risks.

Further, the Gateway process is not triggered until after exploration. Exploration for unconventional coal seam methane involves drilling through fresh water aquifers to the contaminated coal seams beneath. Not only is there the risk of contamination or reduction of the fresh water aquifers, the exploration process also involves the fracking of coal seams with its many attendant environmental risks. These risks are particularly "significant" (Dr. Gavin Mudd, Monash University) when undertaken in proximity to underground long wall coal mining.

Please lodge a submission outlining your objections to the SEPP in its current form. You can do this very simply by clicking on: <http://huntervalleyprotectionalliance.good.do/hvpa-changes-to-nsw-sepp-amendment-2012-/support-proposed-hvpa-changes-to-the-nsw-sepp-amendment-2012/> and following the prompts.

This Public Consultation Draft, if it becomes law without the amendments we seek:

- Encourages coal seam methane gas mining anywhere in NSW. (Minister Hartcher recently told a CSG conference in relation to coal seam methane gas extraction "*NSW is open for business.*")
- Establishes a Gateway Panel of independent scientists to examine applications to mine unconventional coal seam methane gas, but has removed the originally granted power of that Panel to refuse to allow a proposal to go ahead and has opened the floodgates for the methane miners.
- Makes a mockery of its purported protection of Strategic Agricultural Land (SAL) by allowing methane miners to apply to have areas of SAL removed and opened up for methane gas fields.
- Gives no certainty to the future of the Hunter Valley and its wine and tourism industries.
- Gives no certainty to any business operating in rural areas such as accommodation or tourism.
- Breaches the pre-election promises of Ministers O'Farrell, Hazzard, Hartcher and Local Member George Souris.



1st December, 2012. Contact: Graeme Gibson 65791062

www.huntervalleyprotectionalliance.com

www.helpsavethehunter.com