

GAS WATCH 184.

AGL Energy's feeble and failed attempt at preparing the newly required Agricultural Impact Statement makes a mockery of the Government's recently claimed protection of strategic agricultural land.

AGL lodged an "Agricultural Impact Statement" with the State Government, as it is required to do, in support of its application for approval to drill through the upper fresh water aquifers into the coal seam a kilometre or so under the earth's crust.

These Agricultural Impact Statements are now a requirement, so that the Government can see what impact coal seam methane miners will have on existing agriculture.

But there is no point in anyone preparing one at all if they aren't accurate.

AGL's Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) supporting its drilling at Milbrodale in the Hunter Valley is so flawed as to be useless. AGL is just ticking the boxes rather than having a serious attempt at identifying impacts on existing agriculture. The Manager of AGL's coal seam methane mining said he didn't even know that there was an organic vineyard within 500 metres of the drilling site.

On 31st December, 2012 we wrote to the Minister regarding the quality of the AIS asking that the approval for the drilling be stayed until the AIS addresses all agricultural issues. We have had no response.

The Government is probably asking AGL what it wants them to say. A copy of our letter can be found at http://huntervalleyprotectionalliance.com/pdf/HVPA_ToMinHartcher-re-OrganicVineyard.pdf

By way of example the AIS does not address:

- The fact that within 500 metres of the drilling site there is a 32 hectare certified organic vineyard, one of the most awarded and rated organic vineyards in the whole of Australia.
- Any scientific or geological detail, particularly the geological fault line in the area, known as the Bulga-Inlet fault line;
- The impact of the fault line on any other geology of the area, if any, of the earthquake which occurred on 29th April, 2012 registering 2.8 with its epicentre very close to the proposed drilling, it being significant that the epicentre was only a few hundred metres from the surface location of the fault line and is indicative of active movement of the fractures and rifts associated with the fault line.
- Its claim that it "can safely drill within 200 metres of the Bulga-Inlet fault line". It provides no scientific basis for this bald statement.
- Whether or not close by underground mining had anything to do with the initiation of the earthquake.
- The fact that there is a built-up community of Milbrodale, other agricultural activities of significant in the area, and the Milbrodale Public School across the road from the drilling.
- The results of geological surveys around the fault line and its fractures and considering the risk of losing fresh water aquifers. **(It is significant to note here that AGL informed a public meeting that it would not drill in the Milbrodale valley due to the Bulga-Inlet fault line, but for some reason has changed its mind about the risks).**
- Any list of chemicals which it will be using in its drilling, the Government's own Chief Scientist identifying 750 chemicals used by CSG drillers, 650 of which are known or possible carcinogens.

This is an absolute disgrace and an abuse of the system. Not surprising where AGL is concerned.

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