

GAS WATCH 185.

AGL Energy's fracking about turn in Sydney doesn't surprise the Hunter Valley community.

It's typical of AGL's treatment of the general public in the Hunter where AGL is clearly experimenting with coal seam methane exploration and using the Hunter as its guinea pig.

AGL, which has announced that it will be fracking coal seams in the vineyard area of the Hunter Valley during 2013, declared at a local public meeting that it would not drill for coal seam methane in the Milbrodale Valley in the Hunter because that area was affected by the Bulga-Inlet fault line, a serious and well documented fault line.

Clearly the likelihood is that methane, if released from the coal seam, will migrate through the fault, through the vegetation (killing it) and into the atmosphere where it is 20+ times more effective as a global warming blanket than CO₂.

But, predictably, AGL has now changed its mind and has obtained approval to drill a core hole in Milbrodale, stating in its Review of Environmental Factors that it *"can safely drill within 200 metres of the Bulga-Inlet fault line"*. No scientific support for this from any geologist. AGL has simply changed its mind and convinced the Government that it must have been wrong when it earlier accepted the dangers of drilling in the Milbrodale Valley.

Additionally we find that, although this Government has given approval for AGL to drill for coal seam methane on the Yellow Rock property near the vineyard village of Broke in the Hunter Valley, it is apparent that there are significant geological faults beneath that property, together with the Wollombi Coal seam which is extremely salty; which is within 40 to 60 metres from the surface; which reaches the surface at the Wollombi Brook; which will be drilled through by AGL in the drilling it proposes to commence this month.

AGL has conveniently omitted any of this serious geological detail from its application to continue its exploration for coal seam methane in the Hunter.

It makes you wonder just what is wrong with this Company, AGL. Why do they continue with their exploration without making any honest attempt to provide the Government with sound scientific evidence to support their bald claims? It is apparent that AGL is merely experimenting with coal seam methane exploration and extraction and using the Hunter Valley as the guinea pig.

It's about time the Government saw through AGL and, if that Company doesn't do the right thing, simply take the Petroleum Exploration Licence off them and excise Strategic Agricultural Land from any future PEL. Or, as local member and Tourism Minister, George Souris said in an email: *"the best thing AGL can do is surrender the PEL and save a lot of time for everyone in the future."*



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