

# **GAS WATCH 238.**

## **Coal Seam Gas Science Forum – Minister Roberts attends and announces moratorium on CSG Licence applications the very next day.**

**What Minister Roberts heard at the forum must have concerned him greatly.**

The Minister attended the independent Coal Seam Gas Science Forum on 25th March, as did 11 other interested MPs\*\*\*. It is great to see that the new Minister is openly examining the industry rather than pushing the CSG miners' barrow, as has happened in the past. It was also great to see so many Members of Parliament wanting to learn the science of this infant, experimental CSG industry.

The day after attending the forum the Minister announced the NSW Government freeze on Petroleum Exploration Licence Applications until 26th September, 2014.

The scientific information given at the forum scared the audience of many hundreds of interested and concerned people from all walks of life, who filled the Theatre at Parliament House.

At the CSG Science forum\*\* the Minister would have learned from a panel of eminent scientists\*, in short, that:

- **In relation to the integrity of CSG wells:**

- most of them will fail and that 1 in 20 will be leaking methane immediately because of the extreme difficulty in casing and cementing a well sufficiently;
- Leakage will find it's way into groundwater or the atmosphere and each well then becomes a local greenhouse gas emitter;
- It is physically impossible to ensure that a well will not leak methane;
- The gas industry is happy with 5 – 6% of wells leaking!;
- Leakage increases with the age of the well;
- The well will always be an underground structure and will continue to deteriorate;
- Every well will have flaws in it;
- The taxpayers of Australia will have to pay for the maintenance of that well forever;
- Well integrity doesn't exist. Stratas shift, pipes bend. Better compliance, independence and transparency are needed;

- **In relation to groundwater and aquifers:**

- The pressure in the coal seam must be reduced to allow the methane to flow;
- The problem is not so much the removal of the water but the de-pressurisation;
- The change in pressure will alter the whole ecosystem, and may extend kilometres, which may be noticeable in a few weeks, or may not be noticeable for decades or hundreds of years;
- We are about to "stuff up" our water to a significant extent;
- There needs to be proper base line monitoring and data collection for at least 3 years before any Exploration Licence is considered;
- At Narrabri the gas field is going from 3 wells to 850 wells in one hit without cumulative impacts or base line monitoring;
- We can only evaluate the impacts with confidence if they are done and financed independently;
- Every ecosystem is completely different and each must be monitored and examined separately, not just a desk top modelling to support an Exploration Licence application;
- The spraying of salty produced water onto pasture land (as AGL is doing in Gloucester) was roundly criticised for all the obvious reasons.

This is only a very short precis of the 7 hour forum. Please go to the website\*\* to see it in full.

The end result is that the whole industry needs close scientific examination before another well is drilled, before another Exploration Licence or a Production Licence is granted. It is simply too dangerous. The future of our water reserves supplying agriculture, food production and supporting human life depends on it.

It is hoped that this short moratorium will be used wisely by the Government in examining the science behind the industry's real risks. It is hoped that this freeze is not simply a Government attempting to keep the lid on the CSG problem until after the March, 2015 election, but made out of genuine concern for the environment and Australia's water supply.



[www.huntervalleyprotectionalliance.com](http://www.huntervalleyprotectionalliance.com)

27<sup>th</sup> March, 2014. Contact: Graeme Gibson 0418 239359.

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Dr. John Williams, Adjunct Professor in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management, Charles Sturt University, Former Commissioner of the NSW Natural Resources Commission.

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<http://csgscienceforum.com>

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MPs – Andrew Gee, Troy Grant, Anthony Roberts, Jeremy Buckingham, Geoff Provest, Scot MacDonald, Chris Gulaptis, Jenny Gardiner, Thomas George, Walter Secord, John Kaye, Jan Barham.