

GAS WATCH 247.

The National Party gave all sorts of support and promises prior to the last election – but since then has kowtowed to the CSG industry which has resulted in the Wine and Wine tourism industries of the Hunter being a “swiss cheese” of vineyards, vistas, tourist accommodation, restaurants, and cellar doors on the one hand, interspersed with proposed coal seam methane gas wells, pipelines, desalination plants, gas works, contaminated water ponds and more, on the other.

Now an announced freeze on new methane gas exploration licences until after State election next March.

Gives time for another round of pre-election promises and sufficient time to break them. Déjà vu!

We need the National Party to ensure legislation is passed, prior to the next election, to protect the whole of the registered Broke Fordwich winegrowing region rather than the piecemeal mapping which has been done to date, which protects AGL properties and not local farmers.

George Souris, as we predicted earlier in the month, is not standing for re-election.

Surely this is a legacy which George Souris can leave us. It's not much to ask, to honour the previous pre-election promises and protect our industries and our environment.

Last Thursday, 25th September, Minister Roberts announced that the Government would continue its six months freeze on petroleum exploration licence applications for another 12 months, coincidentally taking it past the next election.

Prior to the last election in 2011 solid and strong promises were given by **George Souris, Andrew Stoner, Barry O'Farrell** and others that the winegrowing regions of the Hunter Valley would be protected from coal seam methane gas mining.

George Souris went so far as writing, on 27th January, 2011, a few weeks prior to the last election: *“As far as I am concerned we do not want gas exploration or gas development in these high profile high value tourism areas and I am an opponent of AGLs activities, a matter which I am committed to my constituents to pursue to finality when there is a change of Government.*

There are many environmental risks as well but I am sure you aware of all of these.

The best thing AGL can do is surrender the PEL and save a lot of time for everyone in the future.”

Andrew Stoner and **Barry O'Farrell** were just as firm in their verbal promises, both public and private.

Earlier, on 5th March, 2009 **George Souris** gave a short speech to the House in which he said amongst other things:

“I support the constituents in my electorate who are opposed to the exploration for methane gas in the Broke, Milbrodale, Wollombi, Bulga area.

The Broke, Milbrodale, Wollombi area is very beautiful. It has been developed over many years for agricultural purposes—in particular, dairying originally—but also now for viticulture and the burgeoning tourism industry.

In addition to the relatively close residential settlement, the agricultural and tourism areas make it inappropriate for gas exploration and gas exploitation.”

Of course we haven't heard much at all from **George Souris** since the election in this regard, and we have

heard absolutely nothing from him since he was relegated to the backbench. We ask him to now stand up for us, and be counted.

It appears also that the State Nationals are ignoring the advice of their Federal counterparts. **Senator John Williams** wrote as recently as 7th September, 2014 that he *“is not oblivious to what is occurring and has been involved in Senate inquiries in this field”* and that he *“has made it clear prime agricultural land should be a no-go area and has spoken to his State colleagues at length”*. Clearly they're not listening.

We want more than pre-election promises this time. We have learnt that they meant little once the votes were in.



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