

GAS WATCH 251.

NSW GAS PLAN – Words only to help the current Government limp through the next election.

The NSW Government has obviously accepted that the proper regulation of the CSG industry will be a key consideration by voters in the next election, particularly rural voters whose properties, health, businesses, land values and lifestyles are currently severely at risk. City voters will also be concerned about their water and food supplies.

The Chief Scientist has announced that she is of the belief that the CSG industry is “manageable” if her 16 recommendations are put into place. The obvious assumption is that the CSG is currently unmanageable. The NSW Government says it accepts all of her recommendations.

The “Gas Plan” claims to be a plan to “pause, reset and recommence” the CSG industry. It is not that. Important areas, including the Hunter, Gloucester and Narrabri, are being drilled and/or fraced by AGL and Santos in an industry which is currently unmanageable. If the Government was serious it would not selectively pause and reset, it would pause and reset and recommence on a statewide basis until the relevant legislation is in place and then reviewed to see if they make the CSG industry “manageable”.

The “Gas Plan” is wrongly predicated upon claims by the CSG industry that NSW is going to have a shortage of gas in the years to come and that gas prices will rise as a result.

This is a false assumption, according to the Australia Institute whose research reveals that gas prices are going to rise BECAUSE of CSG production and the export of gas which attaches NSW to the world prices.

Everything is still just words, no L – A – W, law. And we won't see law before the March election.

Eg. The Government says that it has “secured commitments from the major proposed gas projects in NSW that, if approved and developed, they will supply substantive amounts of gas into the NSW market”. Words. Gas retention for use in Australia at existing prices should be enshrined in legislation, not words which can be withdrawn at any time.

Eg. The Government says there will be no CSG exploitation in National Parks – the law in its current form exempts recreation areas in National Parks, but the Government has not said it will protect State Forests, an important oversight.

Eg. The Government says it will maintain the freeze on assessing new CSG licences, but has not said it will maintain a freeze on assessing renewals of expired or expiring licences. PEL 267, covering the Broke Fordwich winegrowing area, expired on 19th January, 2012, and has not been renewed to date. Representations have been made to the Government to either not renew this Licence or to renew it on a limited basis so that State Forests, winegrowing areas and prime agricultural lands are protected. Perhaps the Government could buy back that part of PEL 267.

Eg. There is nothing in the plan confirming that the environment will be protected, that human and animal health will be protected, that land owners can say “no” to CSG operations on their property. And more. There is not enough.

Eg. We have been attempting to meet with Minister Roberts for some months now, but our attempts have failed on deaf ears.

The full recommendations of the Chief Scientist have not been addressed in the “Gas Plan”. There will be no pressure on the Government to introduce legislation incorporation all 16 recommendations once the election has been won or lost. Pressure must be kept on both parties to introduce legislation to fully enshrine in legislation the 16 recommendations of the Chief Scientist.



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