

GAS WATCH 51.

SYDNEY GAS EXPLORATION “NEWS”.

Or just more SYDNEY GAS SPIN?

When Sydney Gas comes knocking on your door, say “NO”.

Sydney Gas has just released its September, 2008 “News” sheet. It appears to be in response to our Gaswatch 50.

If you haven’t received a copy of this “news”, give the Sydney Gas hotline 1300 898 987, any time of the day or night, and ask them to send you a copy.

If you don’t have a copy of Gaswatch 50, then you can pick one up at the Broke Village Store or Bulga store.

Sydney Gas claims that it is visiting every householder within 1 kilometre of its proposed well. This means pretty much everyone in the Broke Village. Please read all this information so you are prepared when, or if, they knock on your door.

Our comments on the Sydney Gas “news” sheet are as follows:

Starting from page 1 with Sydney Gas statements in *italics*.

“The Community Consultative Committee supports Sydney Gas installing water monitoring bores before restarting or establishing any test wells in the area” – The Community did more than support this. The community demanded it.

The community also demands a full Environmental Assessment before any further drilling is commenced.

Sydney Gas is opposing this.

Why?

What has Sydney Gas got to hide?

Why won’t Sydney Gas put the environment before profits, and agree to an Environmental Assessment, which Assessment our legal advice says is required by law?

Well here’s what we think:

Sydney Gas has agreed to install water monitoring bores, thinking that it can appease the community by doing something small and avoiding its moral, and we believe legal, responsibility to undertake a full Environmental Assessment.

This is simply a little pat on the Community’s head by Sydney Gas.

The fact that Sydney Gas is opposing the preparation of a full Environmental Assessment underlines that Sydney Gas simply doesn’t give a hoot about the community or its concerns.

And then, in an effort to play down the appearance of a test well, they show in their “news” a photograph of only a small part of the infrastructure of the existing well in

Broke. Here's a photo of the well showing the structures on the site. To show only part of the site in the photo is simply not honest.



“Test well presentation on-line” – We have commented previously about this poor presentation. See Gaswatch 44 on our Website www.huntergasactiongroup.com.au HB GAG is waiting for a copy of the questions and answers, the unedited transcript of the meeting, etc. Nothing has arrived.

“Milbrodale property” – Sydney Gas now says it is to buy further properties in the Broke – Bulga region. Previously it was only in the Bulga region. Changed its mind again, and only now tells the community. It looks clear that they have to buy land because landowners are realising the danger to their property and the loss of value associated with the gas field, and are rightly refusing to sign access agreements.

“News Briefs” – *“Core conclusions”* – There are no conclusions. These columns tell us nothing, other than Sydney Gas is drilling holes through the earth's crust to a depth of over 1 kilometre, right on our doorstep.

“Seismic surveys” – Let's hope that, firstly, Sydney Gas doesn't make a mess of the roads in the Muswellbrook Shire as it did in Broke and Bulga; and secondly that the community will be provided with a copy of the REF as soon as it is lodged with the Department, as per Sydney Gas' previous undertakings; and thirdly, let's hope that Sydney Gas does not conduct its surveys on Sundays, in breach of their approval, as they did in Broke.

The community wants to see the full REF prior to approval, rather than just having Sydney Gas posting “maps of the seismic lines” on their website, which is all that Sydney Gas is offering.

“Test wells” – Here we have Sydney Gas declaring that they are going to be pumping CO₂ into the atmosphere for 9 months from 9 wells in our valley. This declaration, on its own, is reason enough for a comprehensive ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT to be prepared before any such work is started. Doesn't Sydney Gas have any thought for our environment at all, let alone our village, farms and properties?

“Gas 101 – Test Wells” – Here Sydney Gas repeats some of the information which we outlined in our Gaswatch 50. They say that when drilling, all levels are completely sealed by steel and concrete. **But things go wrong.** If there is human error, or if there is a shift in the ground, then we could lose our underground water and/or have it contaminated.

They say that they need to fracture the coal and then show a photo of what they claim is a test well in Camden. Here is a photo we took of the fracturing operation in Camden only this year. Where's the honesty there:



Sydney Gas confirms the content of our Gaswatch 50 in relation to extracting water from the coal seams, however Sydney Gas **does not address the danger of gas migration from the fractured seams, through the ground, or through wells or bores, with the resultant risk of explosion or poisoning of vegetation, as has occurred from the methane migration from the landfill at Cranbourne, Vic., forcing the evacuation of some 250 houses for up to 12 months.**

Sydney Gas continues to restrict itself to commenting on test wells and coreholes. It does not address the possible 60,000 tanker loads of saline, toxic, water being transported across rural roads if extraction goes ahead.

We note that on this page of the “news” Sydney Gas refers to the coal seam methane gas as “natural gas”. Whilst this methane occurs naturally, it certainly suits Sydney Gas to call it “natural gas” so that it sounds like it cares about the environment. If it does care, then why not agree to an Environmental Assessment?

“by burning the methane we reduce the impact of the gas on the atmosphere dramatically” – more spin. The fact is that they will be pumping CO₂ into the atmosphere for 9 months from 9 wells at a rate of more than 60% of that of burning coal. How can this be environmentally acceptable.

“If the well is no longer required..the site would then be rehabilitated to its original state”. Have a look at the Springs site in Yarramalong, abandoned by Sydney Gas. Does this look rehabilitated to you? Admittedly this is an old photo. It would be interesting for Sydney Gas to provide now a photo of the rehabilitated site.



With Coal Seam Methane Gas extraction being a new industry, and with ineffective law governing it, there needs to be a Government Enquiry into the CSM industry so that proper laws can be enacted to ensure the industry is run properly, and with similar protections which are required to be put in place under the (Coal) Mining Act. Surely we must learn from the history of the coal mining industry, and not take 30 years to get CSM extraction right, with all the problems and risks which will occur on the way.

The greatest spin of all is in the “Degassing myths” column of this “news” sheet. It is quite simply, **deceptive**, to compare petrol with methane gas. The storage of petrol

has been regulated for 100 years. It is contained in tanks, pipes, and bowsers which have been specifically designed for its containment.

Similarly, it is **deceptive** to compare piped gas with uncontained methane gas. Again piped gas has been regulated for decades.

The migration of uncontained methane gas from coal seams when they are fractured is still far from understood. Suffice to say that in many parts of the world, and in Australia, and indeed in the Hunter Valley, methane gas has migrated from the coal seams when they have been fractured, and has come up in wells, bores, and through the soil sterilising the soil.

The General Manager of Sydney Gas has tried this spin before, and it simply doesn't wash.

We're sure that when you read the Sydney Gas "news" you will come to the same views, and no doubt many more.

**IT JUST GETS WORSE.
IS IT POSSIBLE FOR SYDNEY GAS TO EVER UNDERSTAND THE TERM
"COMMUNITY CONSULTATION"?**

**IF SYDNEY GAS KNOCK ON YOUR DOOR, SAY "NO" – Free legal advice is
available in relation to any proposals to you by Sydney Gas. Contact
HB GAG**

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