

GAS WATCH 52.

SYDNEY GAS PRESENTS:

“Some actions and answers”:

On its website, this controversial player in the release of METHANE gas from coal seams has placed on its website, finally, “Some actions and answers”, a copy of a presentation made to the last meeting of the Community Consultative Committee.

Unfortunately we had to bring to the attention of Sydney Gas that, despite their advertising this link on their Test Well Update of 2nd October, it wasn't on the site. According to Sydney Gas PR it was “incorrectly labelled” and “incorrectly attached” to the wrong link. If they can't get a simple thing like that right, what chance have they of drilling through our water tables with safety.

But we digress. Have a look at the “actions and answers” on www.sydneygas.com. We thought we might run through a few of the “actions and answers” for you.

“There is a high gas potential in the Broke and Bulga region”

The map attached to the article shows that there is more chance of finding suitable coal seam METHANE gas in the area shaded blue. A huge area, of which the village of Broke is a pin prick.

Why can't they explore in more remote areas, away from the village, the school and the water tables? This question has been asked many times, but ignored.

We note here that Sydney Gas has taken to referring to this METHANE gas as natural gas. Whilst METHANE Gas is an odourless, colourless, highly flammable, and explosive gas which causes suffocation of humans in enclosed spaces, it is also naturally occurring. Clearly Sydney Gas has changed its language from “METHANE” to “natural” because it thinks that might be more acceptable to the community. Nonsense. METHANE is METHANE. This is just a little more Sydney Gas spin to make them sound more environmentally sensitive without actually having to do anything.

“How far can a well head be from a production plant”

Well, they say it is dependent upon a lot of factors, but the figure they pluck out is 16 kilometres, and you can guarantee this would be the maximum distance. So, somewhere within 16 kilometres of the Broke well they are going to construct this industrial complex, a “gas works”. Huge. Noisy. Smelly. Brightly lit at night. Sixteen kilometres is not far away. Certainly not far enough away.

“eight or nine test wells are planned for Broke and Bulga”

All Sydney Gas has “answered” here is that they will be noisy, *“the faster the flow the louder the noise”*. If noise isn't bad enough.

There is no promise of any study to look at the cumulative impact of this noise added to the noise from the various mines and from the army base.

There is no detail of how much METHANE will leak into the atmosphere from these test wells.

There is no detail of how much CO₂ will be belched into the atmosphere from these 9 wells burning gas for 9 months each.

ANOTHER REASON WE REQUIRE A FULL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT before these wells are activated.

“Seismic surveys”

Sydney Gas have clearly conceded that the seismic surveys performed in Broke and Bulga were poorly done and will now: “more tightly supervise contractors; invite a member of the CCC to inspect the activities; not work in environmentally unsuitable circumstances; and review contract (sic...meaning contract) terms and conditions.” We hope so. We don’t want to see a repeat of damaged road surfaces, they still haven’t properly recovered, a repeat of Sunday work, a repeat of dangerous driving conditions, a repeat of breaching the Department’s conditions for the work.

“What would happen when the well site floods”

Sydney Gas say that they would have provision for automatic shut down. They haven’t addressed the possibility of damage to the well head; or the leaking of gas from a damaged well head or damaged pipe. We all know that automatic, electrical installations can behave unexpectedly when wet or under water. We all know that flood waters can contain heavy floating objects that cause damage.

The answers here are unacceptable.

ANOTHER REASON WE REQUIRE A FULL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT.

“Will Sydney Gas give an undertaking to ensure the test wells comply with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act”

The simply answer given here by Sydney Gas is **“No”**. Some excuses are given. There is no reason why Sydney Gas can’t commission a full Environmental Assessment (previously called an Environmental Impact Statement) to enable full public scrutiny and the full scrutiny of other Government Departments.

By refusing to commission a full Environmental Assessment, Sydney Gas is merely giving lip-service to environmental concerns. If it had an environmental conscience, it would readily ensure no environmental stone was unturned. But that is not what it wants to do. It wants the most simple environmental study possible, a Review of Environmental Factors, which is unavailable for community input and unavailable for other Government Departments to scrutinise.

“Other issues raised”

Sydney Gas say that they are to still consider the “visual impact; fencing; flooding contingencies; access roads; drilling hours; noise; land available for the gas works; traffic; community input into site development”. What have they been doing?

ANOTHER REASON WE REQUIRE A FULL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT.

It might be added here that the current well sites have been there for over two years, maybe four, and NO effort has been made to screen the site with trees, bund walls, landscaping - NOTHING. It sits there boldly in the otherwise rural landscape. So much for being concerned about “visual impact”.

ISSUES CONTINUED TO BE IGNORED BY SYDNEY GAS:

The possibility of:

- ✓ contamination of ground water affecting rivers, streams, brooks, waterways, wells and bores;
- ✓ depletion of ground water;
- ✓ contamination and destruction of vegetation from the saline and toxic water taken from the seams;
- ✓ sterilisation of soil and death of vegetation from migrating and leaking gas.

- ✓ escape of gas increasing global warming;
- ✓ escape of gas risking explosion and suffocation (other than for the General Manager, Mark Harper saying that there *“would be more methane leaking from the back passages of the local school children than from the Sydney Gas well”*);
- ✓ migration of gas, risking explosion;
- ✓ increasing global warming by flaring and burning the gas;
- ✓ large and noisy compressor installations;
- ✓ explosion and leakage of methane into the atmosphere from leaks in pressurised gas pipes;
- ✓ loss of amenity and lifestyle;
- ✓ loss of house and land values;
- ✓ loss of business;

The facts that Sydney Gas:

- ✓ Can only access less than 30% of Broke Bulga area.
- ✓ Has about 2 million hectares of lease area, but chooses to drill right beside Broke.
- ✓ Will not address possibility of methane leaks or migration through soil.
- ✓ Will use millions of litres of water.
- ✓ Will truck millions of litres of toxic water through rural areas.
- ✓ Dismisses views of scientists who don't agree with theirs.
- ✓ Will not agree to formal restrictions, rather wants community to accept its word.
- ✓ Refuses to commit to full Environmental Assessment.
- ✓ Refuses to accept responsibility for damage to all third parties.
- ✓ Refuses to accept responsibility to compensate for loss of land values.
- ✓ Fails in community consultation.

All in all, this “actions and answers” article has done absolutely nothing to address the concerns of the community. At least Sydney Gas can say that has put something on its web-site that the community can read and hope that this is enough to satisfy the Department in its next approval of a Review of Environmental Factors.

IT CONTINUES TO GET EVEN WORSE.

Sydney Gas has millions of hectares to choose from in its lease area, with a huge area of coal seams identical to those under Broke, but it prefers to drill through the aquifers right next to the Broke village.

**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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