

GAS WATCH 64.

“ I’M THE ENEMY”

- Colin Stace, Land and Community advisor, Sydney Gas Ltd.

Whilst we were sitting talking to NBN television in the Broke village today, this spokesman for Sydney Gas walked past and said: *“I’m the enemy.”* Twice.

Today, 9th March, Sydney Gas (currently being taken over by AGL Energy) started drilling water bores on land at the vineyard village of Broke in the Hunter Valley.

You would have thought he might have said *“I’m Colin Stace from Sydney Gas and we are hoping to work together with the community for the betterment of the environment”*. But he didn’t. He said: *“I’m the enemy”*. If asked why he made such a statement you can bet he will say: it was only a joke. Just as the General Manager of Sydney Gas claimed after he said that there would be *“more methane leaking from the back passages of the Broke school children than from the Sydney Gas wells.”*

We assume that Colin Stace is speaking on behalf of Sydney Gas. This is typical of the Sydney Gas approach to the community. Tell the community nothing and think of yourself as *“the enemy”*.

What Sydney Gas has told the community is that it intends to dewater a coal seam at the Broke village to see if the underground water supplying Broke *“drains into the coal seams”*.

On 1st March we wrote to Sydney Gas hoping for, but not expecting, a reply before they started drilling.

This is what we wrote, and of course the self-proclaimed *“enemy”* has not responded.

1. If the water from the aquifers commences to drain into the coal seam, how much water will drain before you can stop it?
2. How is it proposed to stop the draining of the water from the aquifer should it commence to drain into the coal seam?
3. How much toxic/saline water do you propose to extract from the coal seam?
4. How do you propose to deal with the toxic/saline water you extract from the coal seam? Is it proposed to store it on site, if so in what receptacles? Is it proposed to truck it away for treatment, if so, where will it be taken, by what route, and by how many trucks?
5. How much methane gas is it expected will emanate from the pump test experiment?
6. How do you propose to deal with the methane gas which may be produced? Is it to be flared, if so please describe the flaring mechanism? Is it proposed to be released into the atmosphere?
7. It is noted that signage around your test wells warn of the danger of explosion. Please advise what steps are to be taken to ensure there is absolutely no risk of explosion of any methane gas produced.
8. In the event that methane gas migrates through fractures instead of evacuating through the well, please advise what steps would be taken to stop that migration and what remediation of the affected soil and bore water you would undertake.
9. We understand that the Community Consultative Committee is yet to discuss the terms of reference agreed with Professor Willgoose, and that his appointment has not yet been agreed to by the CCC. Please provide us with a copy of the terms of reference.
10. We understand that the matters set out in your *“test wells – Broke”* publication, have not been ratified by the CCC. Please advise why you are commencing this test without the ratification of the CCC.

11. We understand that it was agreed within the CCC that there would be no activation of the Broke village wells until terms of reference had been agreed by the CCC and a report had been given by Professor Willgoose as to the content of the Parsons Brinkerhoff report upon which you rely. Please advise why you propose to commence pump tests without the ratification of the CCC and without the preliminary report from the Professor.
12. Please advise how the pump testing of the Broke Village wells will assist in ascertaining whether or not wells drilled in other areas of the Hunter Bulga Exploration area will affect the aquifers and water tables in those other areas.
13. With substantial coal measures being available throughout PEL 4 and PEL 267, please advise why you find it necessary to confront the village of Broke, endangering the village by the possible loss of underground water, endangering the village by the possibility of methane gas explosion, endangering the village by the possibility of contamination of bores and soil by methane gas, when you have over 17,000 square kilometres of alternative land, much of it away from aquifers and water tables.

And, on top of all this, the Community Consultative Committee set up at our behest by the Minister hasn't met since last year, with Sydney Gas postponing the last meeting. Apparently a CCC meeting is to take place this week. Will they answer the questions then?

All we want, at this stage, is for Sydney Gas to agree to a full Environmental Assessment open to public and Governmental scrutiny.

WHY WON'T SYDNEY GAS AGREED TO A FULL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF THEIR ACTIVITIES BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE?

WHAT ARE THEY HIDING?

WHAT ARE THEY WORRIED ABOUT?

WHY DO THEY SEE THEMSELVES AS "THE ENEMY".

Answer: They know that our underground water is at risk. They are worried about explosion so close to the village and the school.

WE MUST STOP THIS INVASION OF OUR VILLAGE.

If our water goes, so does our lifestyle, and our children's future.

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