

GAS WATCH 83.

Minister Ian Macdonald hides behind the Minister for Planning. Refuses Environmental study in Hunter.

In response to complaint by the community that Minister Macdonald had refused to consider initiating a full Environmental Assessment of the Hunter, Minister Maconald hid behind his claim that *"I am the Minister for Mineral Resources, not the Minister for Planning"*.

He further said that *"all new mining proposals submitted to the Department of Planning would require approval...which would require a transparent and thorough assessment of all relevant issues."* (Newcastle Herald 14.4.2010).

This last statement is, quite simply, NOT TRUE. And surely Minister Macdonald should know it.

Many decisions are made in-house in this Minister's own Department without an Environmental Impact Statement; without an Environmental Assessment; without looking at cumulative effect; without referral to the Department of Planning; without being able to be scrutinized or commented upon by the community.

Often the only supporting document is a Review of Environmental Factors, which again is dealt with in-house in this Minister's Department, without referral to the Planning Department or anyone else.

Perhaps this Minister doesn't really know what goes on in his Department.

On 17th March, 2010, Petroleum Exploration Licence 4 was renewed for 6 years. This was done in-house in this Minister's Department. No referral to the community or the Department of Planning.

In January 2010, approval was given to AGL Energy to drill 8 exploratory core holes through fresh water aquifers into coal seams. Again there was no referral to the Department of Planning or to the community.

Minister Macdonald claims that our allegation that he has aided and abetted the sacrifice of the agriculture, horticulture, viticulture and beauty of the Hunter Valley to the fossil fuel industry is *"over the top and inappropriate."*

It appears perfectly appropriate and nowhere near over the top.

Makes one wonder if he ever thought of speaking to the Minister for Planning and saying *"We have a huge environmental problem in the Hunter. Let's work together."* Bit too simple, maybe?

