



CLARENCE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE Inc

29-31 Skinner Street

South Grafton 2460

Phone/ Fax: 02 6643 1863

Web site: www.cec.org.au

E-mail: admin@cec.org.au

Date: 15th December 2014

The Hon Chris Gulaptis
NSW Member for Clarence
clarence@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Gulaptis

Renewal of a gas exploration licences

The Clarence Environment Centre feels compelled to write in protest against the government's recent decision to renew gas exploration licences across large areas of the Northern Rivers, in what we see as a clear message that the government, and the industry, is looking to continue business as usual with the development of unconventional gas in our region.

The NSW Chief Scientist has flagged many threats posed by the unconventional gas industry and has recommended that certain areas be deemed as inappropriate and should be classed as no go zones for gas-fields. We believe all of coastal NSW, much of Tablelands, and western slopes fall under that category. Given our high population density, our reliance on our clean and green image which is critical to the agricultural and tourism industry, and that most of our rivers, creeks and dams rely on underground water, we believe the entire region should be declared gas-field free.

These licence renewals were granted despite the clear message the government has received, with many thousands of people regularly rallying against the industry's plans to industrialise the region. Our community has overwhelmingly voted yes to a gas-field free Northern Rivers, with comprehensive road surveys showing that over 90% of rural landowners and residents across the NSW North Coast are opposed to this industry invading their neighbourhoods, disrupting their lives, threatening their health and livelihoods, and potentially polluting their land and water.

Previous letters and communication of public concerns to yourself and the government over the proposed gas industry 'invasion', have been met by responses blaming the previous Labor Government (no argument there), and assurances that rigorous safeguards have now been put in place to by the Coalition.

We are not convinced by these statements, particularly in the light of weekend reports that Santos and other gas mining companies have been contributing large sums of money to Coalition coffers, much of which was never declared.

It is impossible to guarantee that water quality, surface and underground, can be protected after fracking and water extraction has occurred. The Queensland Government has refused to acknowledge their own health department's concerns about the human health problems associated with fugitive methane emissions from gas-fields, and we fear the NSW Government will do likewise.

Research by the Southern Cross University, showing greatly elevated levels of methane around gas fields, has now been peer reviewed and published, showing the enormous problems this will cause, not only to the health of those forced to live within these gas-fields, but also by adding greenhouse gasses that we know will lead to catastrophic climate change.

Last week the Clarence Valley Council joined the majority of other north coast councils in calling for a halt to gas exploration and mining in their LGA, identifying that the industry brings with it a major reduction in land values, and negative impacts on tourism that, again this week, was shown to inject billions of dollars annually into the north coast economy.

Government's own publications identify that the North and Mid North Coasts are both in the top five tourism destinations in Australia, behind The Gold Coast and Tropical Queensland, and also acknowledge that: “ *Tourism is an important part of the NSW economy, which in 2012-13 contributed \$25.1 billion (Gross Value Added) to the NSW economy and employed 267,000 people*”, all of which could be put at risk if gas wells dominate the landscape, and mining associated vehicles clog up our country roads as they have in Queensland.

In closing, we would like to stress that democracy needs to be respected and our community demands to be listened to. Therefore, we ask that you, as the people's representative, speak out in the cabinet room and parliament on our behalf, and put a stop to this toxic industry in NSW.

Yours Sincerely



John Edwards
Honorary Secretary