



North Coast Environment Council Inc.

North Coast Environment Council  
www.ncec.org.au  
c/ Clarence Environment Centre  
31 Skinner St, Sth Grafton 2460

June 10, 2014

The Hon. Anthony Roberts MP  
Resources and Energy Minister  
[office@roberts.minister.nsw.gov.au](mailto:office@roberts.minister.nsw.gov.au)  
The Hon. Rob Stokes MP  
Minister for Environment  
[office@stokes.minister.nsw.gov.au](mailto:office@stokes.minister.nsw.gov.au)  
The Hon. Pru Goward  
Minister for Planning  
[office@goward.minister.nsw.gov.au](mailto:office@goward.minister.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Ministers,

### **The Decision to suspend Metgasco's gas exploration licence**

The North Coast Environment Council is the peak umbrella group, that has represented community and environment groups between Newcastle and the Queensland border for more than a quarter of a century. We have a proud record of environmental advocacy, and have been strongly opposed to the unconventional gas industry since the risks associated with new technologies such as horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing were revealed.

Therefore, we applaud the Government's decision to suspend Metgasco's exploration licence at Bentley near Lismore.

The Minister's stated reason for the suspension was a lack of community consultation and concerns about the way in which Metgasco has characterised its activities, both issues with which we wholeheartedly agree. In fact, despite consultation with environment groups being a recognised procedure for all major development proposals, no gas mining company on the North Coast of NSW, including Metgasco, has ever attempted to contact the North Coast Environment Council on any matter. Nor have they, to the best of our knowledge, attempted to contact any of our member groups.

Instead, in the face of growing opposition, Metgasco and the gas industry simply undertook a media campaign accusing "opponents" of "spreading misleading and erroneous information", while failing to detail exactly what that misleading information was. In the mean time television viewers were treated with truly misleading industry advertising such as that proclaiming that a gas well takes up less space than half a tennis court.

At no time during the early years of their operations in the Lismore area did Metgasco fully describe what unconventional gas mining entailed. There was no mention of the thousands of well-heads and connecting road and pipeline infrastructure. No mention of compressor stations, the lakes of toxic produced water, fracking chemicals, or the health implications from leaking methane, that accompany a fully operating gas field.

As opposition built in 2013, with major blockades at Glenugie and Doubtful Creek making it clear

that the Northern Rivers community was strongly opposed to any gas fields being established in the region, the Government announced that Metgasco would be opening a shop-front in Casino where people could bring their concerns and learn the “facts” about unconventional gas mining. As with other consultation, this shop-front never materialised.

The North Coast Environment Council fully endorses the Minister's decision to suspend Metgasco's licence, and urges the Government to consider complete bans on any further gas mining development in coastal NSW because of the clear risks to water quality and human health. Also we ask that consideration be given to outlawing the practice of hydraulic fracturing or any form of “stimulation” of underground rock formations in NSW.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susie Russell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susie Russell  
President  
North Coast Environment Council