

Coalition goes cold on banning coal-seam gas

Murray Simpson

Hopes of an unofficial moratorium on coal-seam gas (CSG) exploration licences in NSW since the change of government in March have failed to materialise and it's business as usual for the mining sector.

Since the Liberal-National coalition swept into power in March, the licensing authority, the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), has issued two new exploration licences.

So far the Tweed and Byron Shires have been spared. Macquarie Energy's petroleum exploration licence (PEL) 134 application encompasses significant areas of the upper Tweed around Tyalgum.

Presently there is no indication when a decision is likely, however *The Echo* understands it is still being assessed.

Data amassed by the Kyogle-based Environmental Defend-

ers Office (EDO), indicates two PELs have been issued by the department since March – one to Eastern Star Gas for the Moree and Warrumbungle Ranges area and the other to AGL for Guyra.

The EDO's Mark Byrne says the current regulatory structure is designed for orthodox prospecting but hopelessly inadequate to cope with the issues created by the new technology associated with coal-seam gas exploration.

In a submission to the NSW Coal and Gas Strategy scoping document earlier this year, Mr Byrne said one of the main issues with the current system is the underlying assumption that exploratory activities for CSG are benign.

Mr Byrne said the EDO called for a moratorium on CSG extraction and exploration while a strategic plan is developed with full community and independent scientific input.

Protesters highlight mining industry toxicity



Local identity Rose Wanchap recently attended a blockade for the Lock the Gate campaign against coal-seam gas mining.

The Byron Bay real estate owner-operator travelled to Tara Downs in South Queensland over the long weekend, where she claims there were 'some 100 or so warriors at the front line.'

'The mining giants, with tax payers subsidies, have gotten the green light to sink some 44,000 wells deep into the earth to extract gas by pumping a toxic line-up of chemi-

cals that will show up in our drinking water, destroying our agricultural land and threatening our health.

'These wells will affect us directly in our water supply.' She says northern New South Wales and southern Queensland is directly in their sights.

'It is an atrocity beyond our wildest nightmares. Surprisingly many of the people at the blockade were of the grey-haired brigade, over 60s, baby boomers worried about the future for their grandchildren.'

Photo supplied

Casino to Ipswich gas pipeline proposed

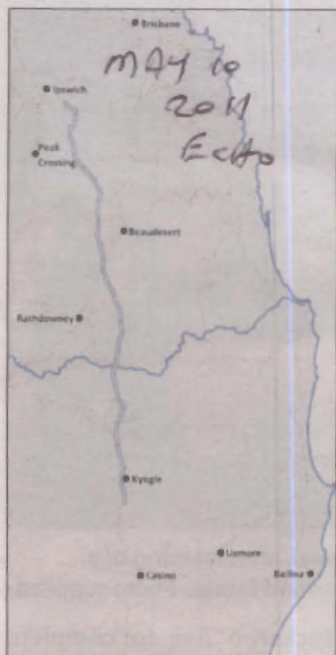
Energy company Metgasco is proposing to construct a gas transmission pipeline from Casino in northern New South Wales to deliver gas to Ipswich in south-east Queensland.

According to its website, the Lions Way pipeline (the Pipeline) 'represents another step in Metgasco's development of the large gas resources that it has discovered in northern New South Wales.' The company claims the pipeline will transport gas for low greenhouse gas emission power generation and commercial and household use in south-east Queensland.

The company says the pipeline proposal starts in Casino and heads north via Kyogle. 'It will then travel along the Lions Road and then into Queensland to head north to Ipswich. The total length of the pipeline will be approximately 145km, and will be buried for its entire length, typically at depths of 900mm – 1,500mm.

'The only parts above ground will be control valves and facilities to enable internal cleaning and monitoring of the pipeline.'

'An area of approximately 30 metres in width will be cleared



for the pipeline – called the Right of Way (ROW) – during construction. In addition, there may be some temporary facilities set up for pipe delivery and storage, work areas and workers accommodation.

'Because the pipeline will be built in New South Wales and Queensland, both state governments will assess the environmental impact of the project.' For more see www.metgasco.com.au/files/lion.

Rally this Saturday unites community against CSG

The public rally against coal-seam gas mining planned for next Saturday, May 14, at Murwillumbah's Knox Park has brought together a range of diverse community lobby groups.

The rally is being organised by the newly formed Northern Rivers Guardians (NRG) and the Caldera Environment Centre, with support from the Combined Tweed Rural Industries Association and the local branch of the NSW Canegrowers Association.

A meeting of the NRG at Tyalgum this week drew 30 people to plan local strategies for action and fundraising to fight CSG mining.

NRG spokesman Michael

McNamara said the rally, or 'united community gathering', would include a march through the Murwillumbah CBD from 11.15am and speakers from a range of community groups and organisations from noon.

'Food will be available for purchase and families are encouraged to make a day of it,' he said.

'This campaign is all about the legacy we leave our children and grandchildren, whether it be in terms of viable agricultural or tourism enterprises, with the associated employment opportunities, or a healthy and vibrant environment.'

Further information is available at the NRG website www.northernriversguardians.org.