

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

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GT5120

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The Hon Robert Brown MLC
Chair
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

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Dear Committee members

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

On behalf of Greater Taree City Council, I wish to advise you that whilst our Mayor and Councillors are very interested in the issue, we are unable to make a submission to the INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS as the timeframe for preparing such submissions prevented a report being prepared and considered at Council's most recent Ordinary Meeting, held 17 August. For Council to consider such a specific matter, reports were required to be prepared by the 5 August. As Council does not meet again until the third week in September, a resolution regarding an agreed submission could not be considered.

In addition, Council does not yet believe that is well informed enough to resolve a policy position that would reflect credibly upon the social, environmental and economic impacts of coal seam gas (CSG) activities, including exploration and commercial extraction. The particular terms of references relating to the impact of CSG activities on regional development, investment and employment, and any impact on local / regional infrastructure and local planning control mechanisms are of particular interest to Council. However, at this time we are unable to provide a detailed response.

By way of background, Greater Taree City Council has been discussing this matter within workshops and at Ordinary Council meetings for nearly 12 months. At an Ordinary Council Meeting held 2 February 2011, it was resolved:

"That Council staff prepare a report on policy response to coal seam gas drilling in the Manning Catchment, and Council's position to possible oil/gas drilling off the Manning Coastline."

At a subsequent meeting of Council held 29 June 2011, a further report was discussed by Council. I have attached a copy for the Committee. The following was resolved:

MOVED Cr Keegan/Richardson

That the information pertaining to coal seam gas drilling in the Manning Catchment and oil/gas drilling off the Manning Coastline presented in the report, be noted.

That a workshop be held to discuss the ecological, social and economic impacts on the Manning Valley and its catchment from potential coal seam gas mining.

That after the workshop, Council formulates a policy position on coal seam gas mining.

That Council note the significant community concerns to this issue.

It should be noted that Council does not have a policy response in relation to coal seam gas drilling in the Manning Catchment as it is not the consent authority. The situation of CSG activities has generated passionate and differing scientific, industry and community views. Council staff do not hold expertise in the matter of coal seam gas activities.

However, it is acknowledged that as a responsible organisation Council should take a prudent approach to coal seam gas and coastal oil and gas drilling and encourage all of the approval bodies to ensure they have taken a vigilant approach to the approval of such projects. As with any approval, applicants are required to provide the appropriate scientific studies to ensure the safety of the proposed project.

Given the Public Hearing scheduled to be held in Taree 31 October, 2011, I respectfully request that Council be provided with access as a level of government to attend and observe the hearing as a means of becoming better informed on the technical, business, environmental and social viewpoints.

In anticipation of a positive response, I look forward to the opportunity of meeting Committee members and staff when they gather in Taree. I am sure that if time permitted that the Mayor and Councillors would welcome the opportunity for you to have morning tea with us at the Council chambers and share any observations that you may have gathered to date.

Yours faithfully

Gerard José

Gerard M José
GENERAL MANAGER