

Submission
No 263

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Ms Shannon McLachlan

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Mrs Lea McLachlan

Dear Committee Members,

RE: NSW Inquiry into Coal Seam Gas

I would just like to inform you that I, Lea McLachlan, as a resident of Campbelltown NSW am strongly opposed to the Camden Gas Project (CGP). I am opposed to this project for many reasons but ultimately I feel as though the invasion of mining companies in my home town for the 'Gas Rush' is equivalent to a war. A war on the 'Gas Rush' that as a proud Australian and a proud resident of Campbelltown, it is my unequivocal duty to fight. I have to fight to keep my air clean and my water safe. I have to fight to keep future generations safe from cancer causing BTEX chemicals. I have to fight to keep my house and land values unaffected by these mining giants. Most of all, I have to fight to keep the Scenic Hills, the "Green Lungs" of this wonderful community clean and fighting fit.

Campbelltown as a suburb is a wonderful area. It is the place perhaps the more affluent areas of Sydney like to stereotype and taunt. Yes we have our fair share of problems, but what the rest of Sydney do not know, is that it is a lovely area, full of natural beauty. It is full of green rolling hills, native birds and wildlife. These birds and wildlife species could potentially disappear from our area if the Camden Gas Project (CGP) goes ahead. As evidence to support the fact that there are indeed critically endangered species in this area I will let you know that my husband and I have seen and heard the critically endangered Swift Parrot whilst walking our dog at Raby hockey fields. The natural beauty of Campbelltown helps to overshadow and

overcome the adverse social and financial problems for which Campbelltown is known. Campbelltown is Australia's first green city and it is under attack.

AGL as an opponent likes to fight dirty. The Government as it stands, allows this large corporation to self monitor and self report. When one of their gas wells was caught on film polluting the environment at Glen Alpine in Campbelltown (May 17 2011), they had a variety of stories as to what was actually happening. They told us it was harmless soap mist. They did not report this incident to the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) until two days after the incident had occurred.

I sincerely doubt that AGL would treat the Scenic Hills and Campbelltown in general with the respect it deserves. Based on their track record, would AGL have even notified anyone had the incident not been caught on camera? Has contamination like this happened before? All other industries are regulated by the POEO Act and by law must notify the EPA even if they merely suspect an environmental pollution incident has occurred. Who will protect Australia from environmental vandalism masked as mining when the perpetrators can give themselves a 'smack on the wrist', release a press statement and say it won't happen again? This is unacceptable and un-Australian.

AGL claims to have a good rapport with the local community. Let me tell you this is not the case. AGL's invasion of Campbelltown originally included the construction of a gas extraction plant at Varroville, in the heart of the scenic hills. This gas plant would be only metres from homes, schools and religious retreats, using roads built for cattle to transport chemicals and rigging equipment back and forth. This attack was met by strong community backlash, before an election and AGL stood down and

the plans were squashed. Gas mining in suburban areas is one hundred percent incompatible.

As a community, we knew the battle was not over. As it stands, the planned construction of 72 wells from the areas known as Denham Court in the North to Mount Annan in the south (including plans to drill and mine in a National Botanic Garden) would need further infrastructure. AGL do not know how they are going to pump this extra gas supply back to their processing plant at Rosalind Park. This can only mean that their original plan of building a gas processing plant at Varroville, so close to homes and schools, wildlife and green rolling hills will be back on the agenda if the Camden Gas Project is allowed to go ahead. Please do not let this happen, reject the Camden Gas Project.

AGL are very confident that the Camden Gas Project will go ahead. They are already setting up monitoring bores in the scenic hills. A confident opponent, that self monitors and self reports is a dangerous one. A dangerous opponent that is accountable to no one. This terrifies me. This should terrify all proud Australians.

At what cost do we allow AGL to mine in suburban Campbelltown? To ruin the scenic hills, the green lungs of Campbelltown? Once this area is ruined, it will never be the same again.

AGL claims their operations will bring jobs. I hardly think the gain of a few roles in the area is worth selling our souls. I doubt the handful of employees will even be locals. Let me tell you what I know Campbelltown will gain if the Camden Gas Project goes ahead. Pollution will increase. Traffic will increase (I don't know if anyone has ever been stuck on Narellan road in peak hour, but I can guarantee you that extra

rig trucks and water and chemical transporting vehicles will further add to the frustration commuters feel on a daily basis). Noise will be increased. Illnesses will increase (Campbelltown already has one of the highest incidents of Asthma in Australia). Can AGL prove that these things won't happen? Of course they can't. Mining in suburban areas is incompatible, end of story.

Now let me tell you what we stand to lose if the Camden Gas Project goes ahead. House and land prices will be greatly reduced. The serenity we experience from the existence of pristine green spaces will be lost. The Swift parrot may never return. The colonies of Eastern Rosellas and Rainbow Lorikeets that I enjoy seeing on a daily basis may never be seen again. Quality of life will be reduced. Campbelltown's identity as Australia's first Green city will be long forgotten.

Mining in Suburbia is absurd. The suburbs are incompatible for mining areas for so many reasons. We might not have hundreds of acres but we still have the potential to become contaminated. We have backyard veggie gardens and we have water tanks. We have children and pets. We enjoy going for walks in our rolling hills and breathing in clean air. Coal Seam Gas Mining is not proven to be safe.

You only have to look at this issue internationally to realize that Australia (and you as a committee) now has the ability to prevent making the same mistakes as the United States. Knowing that in America, the environmental and health affects are being felt by many citizens. Citizens that can light their tap water on fire and whose horses and cats are losing their hair and dying of cancer. These citizens themselves have no power or funds to hold the companies responsible for contaminating their land and environment and harming their beloved animals.

In America, the citizens are the ones who have the responsibility of proving that the coal seam gas mining caused their problems. How are they expected to do that? It is a lost battle. The large mining corporations have unlimited funds and armies of solicitors that scare and defeat even the most robust contender. I can not help but see the similarities between the modus operandi of the American Mining Giants, the plight of the everyday citizens and the current battle being waged in the Scenic Hills, Campbelltown NSW. Do not let them win this war.

The multi million dollar operations proposed in the scenic hills near my home (The Camden Gas Project) raises alarm bells in my mind. It has both unknown environmental impacts along with unknown health risks to the local community. This process has been banned in France due to this very reason. The process has not been proven to be safe. Let me repeat, it has not been proven to be safe, it is a new technology. The CSIRO are still researching the effects of this process on the environment.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my opposition to the Camden Gas Project and the destruction of my home town as I know it. Campbelltown is suburbia and suburbia is incompatible with gas mining. There are far too many unknown risks. Operations by AGL are not going to stabilize if they are approved and implemented, they will be increased and the need for a gas plant in Varroville will be next on the agenda.

The Scenic hills need your protection. The Scenic hills is a place of retreat, it is home to critically endangered wildlife. It is suburbia. It is not to be ravaged to make millions of dollars for companies that supply gas to export offshore to China. Australia will not benefit from this devious endeavor any which way you look at it.

These two necessary items for life – Air and Water, once destroyed cannot be returned to their former pristine condition. Coal Seam Gas mining and the controversial process of fracking have far too many unknowns. It has not been proven to be safe. Please, I implore you to use your sensible wits and as Proud Australians, make the best decision for future Australians. Thank you.