

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Organisation: Mudgee District Environment Group
Name: Mr Ian McAdam
Position: Secretary
Date received: 5/09/2011

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No 5
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Email: gpscno5@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

SUBMISSION
Inquiry into Coal Seam Gas in NSW

Mudgee District Environment Group (MDEG), based in the Mid-Western Region local government area in NSW, is working for the conservation of our natural heritage and a sustainable future for our children.

MDEG welcomes the opportunity to lodge a submission to the Coal Seam Gas Inquiry and congratulates the NSW Government for undertaking a close examination of this rapidly emerging industry.

The current Petroleum titles in the Mudgee region cover a very large area of land (see Attachment). This has occurred with no information or consultation provided to landholders, local government or other government agencies. This scale of exploration title, with no right of appeal for affected landowners, is unprecedented.

MDEG believes that full environmental and land use studies should be conducted before the granting of any exploration license in NSW. A moratorium on all coal seam gas (CSG) exploration and production is required until such time as the entire proposed Strategic Regional Land Use Plan is finalised.

This process should include rigorous and independent assessment of environmental, social and health impacts. It should also result in a prohibition on CSG exploration and production in important bushland, valuable farmland, groundwater aquifers, residential areas and public lands.

Term of Reference: 1d.

MDEG does not support the use of Crown Land including Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves (TSRs), State Forests or State Conservation Areas (SCAs) for the purpose of CSG exploration, production or transmission through pipelines.

These areas have other important economic and public uses and provide a range of important environmental benefits and ecosystem services. The disturbance to the environment caused by clearing for drilling rigs, pipelines, roads and other infrastructure necessary to support CSG production is a major impact on these important public lands.

Other users of TSRs including the grazing and apiary industries will be adversely impacted by CSG activities on these areas. TSRs contain very significant environmental values, in many instances, and should not be made available for heavy industrial purposes. One important value is the connectivity of remnant vegetation they provide across the landscape. This value will be destroyed by the level of clearing needed around CSG exploration and production facilities.

State Forests are primarily for the purpose of supplying timber. However, they also provide important stands of contiguous bush land in heavily cleared landscapes. The fragmentation caused by clearing for CSG exploration and production, as demonstrated in Pilliga State Forest in north west NSW, is a major threat to important environmental values and therefore, unacceptable.

Likewise, SCAs have an important ecological role in the landscape which will be destroyed by CSG industrial scale activities. The best type of mining to occur in SCAs is underground mining in the least sensitive areas.

MDEG also does not support CSG exploration drilling adjacent to National Parks and Nature Reserves. Recent drilling by Planet Gas on the 'Poggy' property, an inholding in the Goulburn River National Park, was within 500 meters of the reserve. There is no evidence that a comprehensive review of environmental factors considering the groundwater system connected to the National Park was undertaken.

The Sydney Sandstone Basin has perched aquifer systems and other complex water sources. The relationship between surface vegetation, springs and other groundwater dependent ecosystems need to be clearly understood. The consideration of CSG production in the middle of a National Park is unacceptable.

Term of Reference 3e:

CSG is not required for the purpose of supplying base load or peak power to NSW energy needs. MDEG has researched a viable 50MW solar thermal power station that could be built in the region immediately. This power source could supply up to 30,000 homes between Mudgee and Coonabarabran. Once this renewable energy power station was constructed, further inputs would be minimal.

Most of the large CSG proposals in NSW are to provide the export market and have no connection to domestic energy needs.

By considering CSG as a 'transition fuel' away from coal, the NSW Government is preventing investment in the rapid uptake of renewable energy projects. These can supply both base load and peak load power with no carbon emissions or land use disturbance as caused by the fossil fuel industry.

Term of Reference 4:

CSG extraction should be regulated under both the *Native Vegetation Act 2003* and the *Water Management Act 2000*.

Legislation controlling activities on public lands must be strengthened to prevent the extent of impacts caused by the CSG industry, particularly at the exploration stage. The environmental standards for a Review of Environmental Factors must be improved.

These preliminary processes must also take into account the provisions of Commonwealth environmental legislation, *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)*.

Conclusion

MDEG considers the rate of expansion of the CSG industry in the Mid Western Region local government area to be unsustainable. The level of infrastructure required to service industrial scale CSG production has major impacts on other land uses.

The impact on water sources, biodiversity, greenhouse gas emissions, human settlement and other industries is unacceptable and should be examined under a full costs-benefits analysis.

MDEG seeks that the Inquiry recommend a moratorium on the CSG industry until:

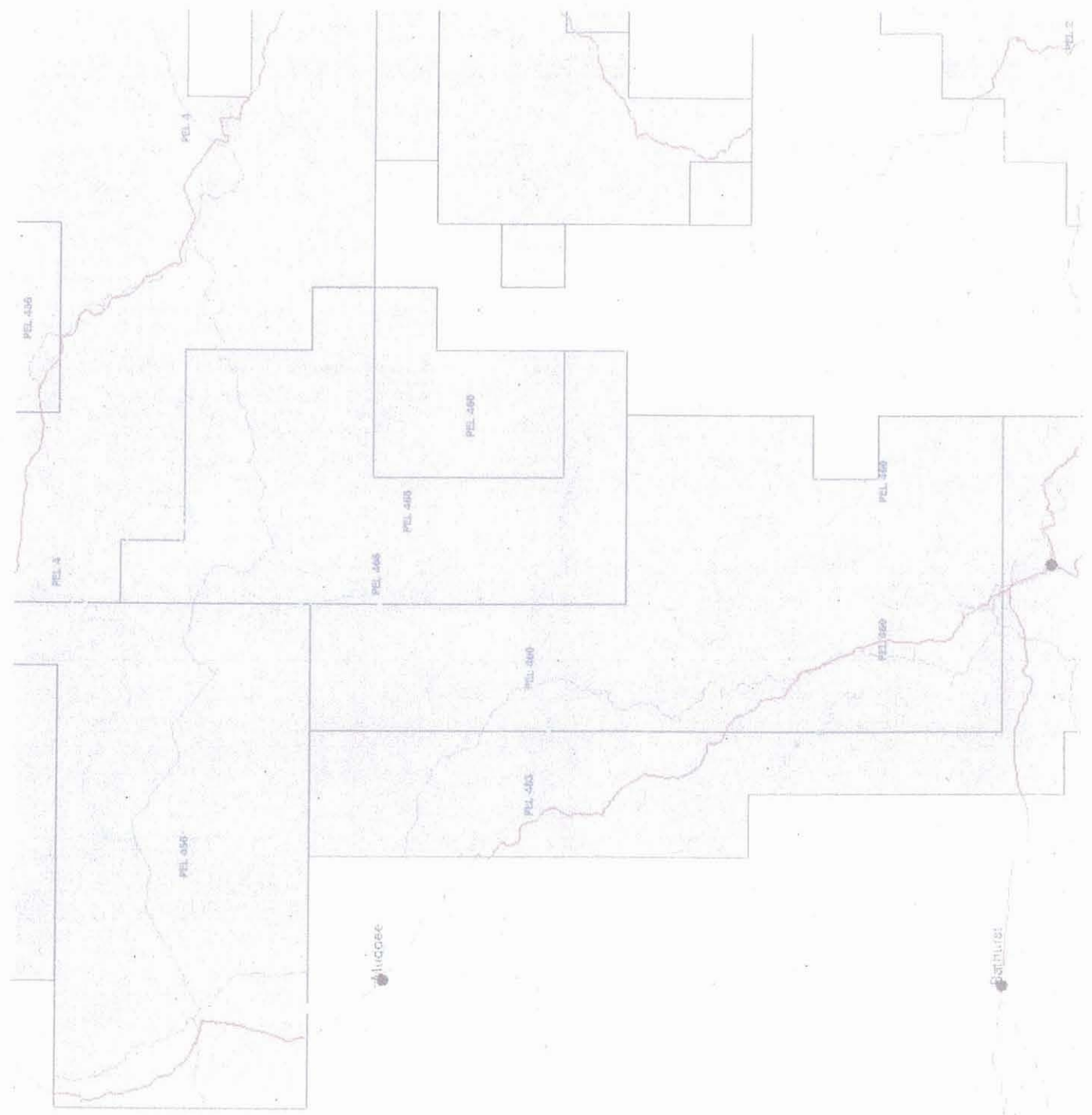
- all relevant studies relating to its impacts have been conducted
- relevant environmental legislation covers its activities
- adequate investment is provided to the renewable energy industry

Yours sincerely

Ian McAdam
Secretary

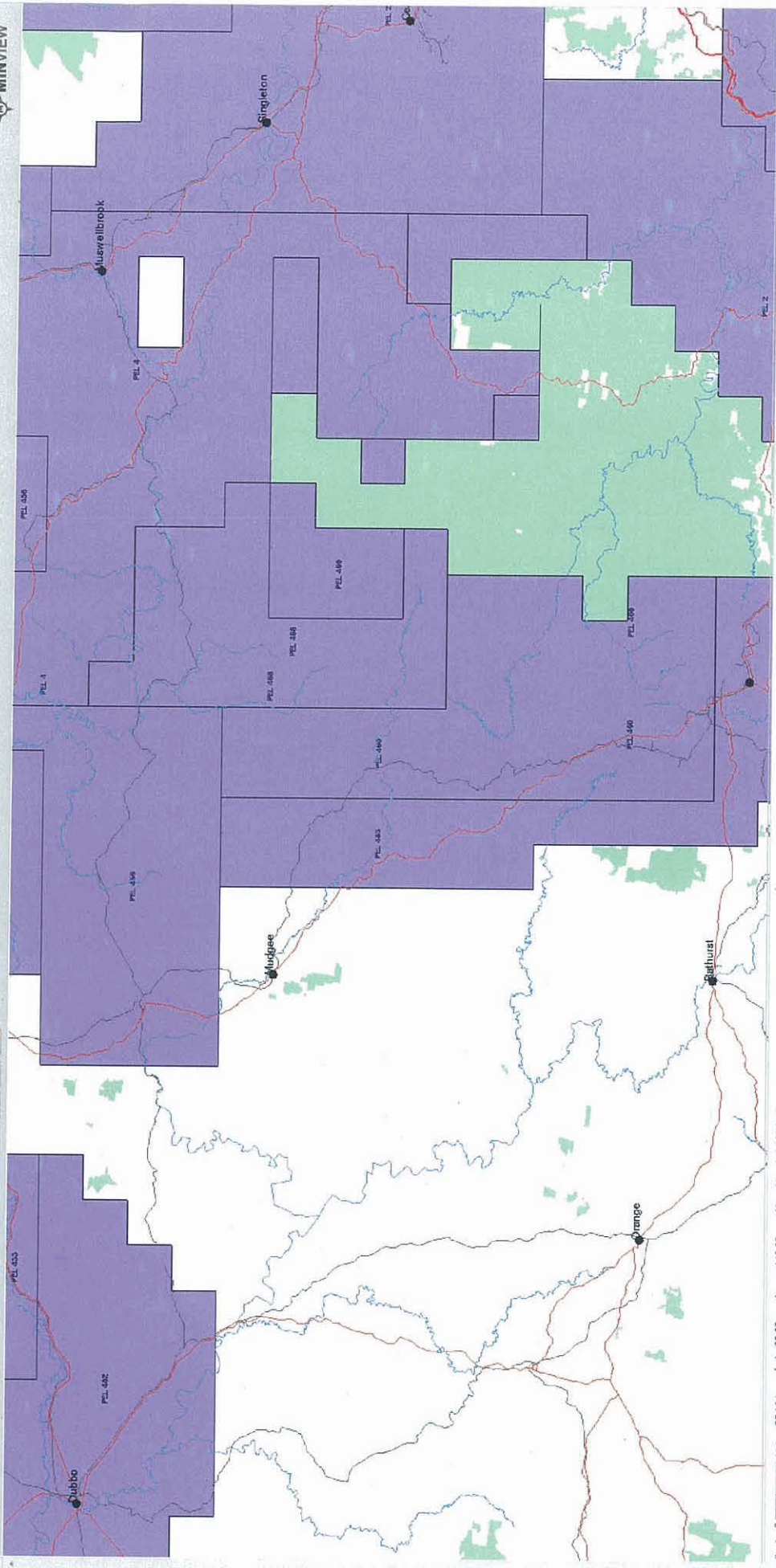
Monday 5 September 2011

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Title Layers

- ☒ Localities
- ☒ Rivers
- ☒ Roads
- ☒ Railways
- ☐ Coal Title Applications
- ☐ Current Coal Titles
- ☐ Mineral Title Applications
- ☐ Current Mineral Titles
- ☐ Petroleum Title Applications
- ☒ Current Petroleum Titles
- ☐ Current Titles by Group
- ☐ Current Title Apps by Group
- ☐ Historical ELs
- ☐ Major Geology
- ☐ Declared Wilderness Areas
- ☒ National Parks
- ☐ Units
- ☐ Blocks
- ☐ Cadastral Parcels
- ☐ 100K Mapsheets
- ☐ 250K Mapsheets
- ☒ State Boundary



Scale: 0 10 km GDA94
 Lat: -32.82 Long: 146.62
 Map Sheet: 1250K - Dubbo (S055-4) 1:100K - Wellington (8532)