



Stuart Ayres MP

Member for Penrith



Lachlan Garland
President
Blue Mountains Conservation Society
PO Box 29
Wentworth Falls NSW 2782

Dear Mr Garland

Thank you for your correspondence and subsequent meeting concerning the coal seam gas industry in New South Wales.

The NSW Government has recently introduced 27 new measures to further safeguard the health and safety of the community, and to protect our valuable land and water resources. These include:

- a new policy to protect aquifers and prevent ground water contamination
- the banning of dangerous chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing process
- new well drilling regulations
- toughened penalties for environmental breaches.

The NSW Government has also implemented two new Codes of Practice that require world's best practice for coal seam gas hydraulic fracturing and well design.

The new Codes of Practice were independently peer-reviewed by the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer, Professor Mary O'Kane, and followed a 12 month moratorium on the granting of new approvals for use of hydraulic fracturing during coal seam gas drilling.

All coal seam gas exploration and production licences are subject to the new Codes of Practice, which are also included as a condition of title. Failure to comply with title conditions can result in enforcement action against the holder, including prosecution and title cancellation.

It should be noted that new techniques such as horizontal well drilling are emerging as an alternative to hydraulic fracturing and are more commonly used in NSW.

The NSW Government has recently increased the number of drilling inspectors in the field to improve the monitoring of gas exploration and production, and has appointed a Land and Water Commissioner to provide guidance to landholders and the community in relation to coal seam gas activities.

The coal seam gas industry has been operating successfully in NSW for more than 10 years without incident; and the development of a domestic industry presents a significant economic opportunity for NSW.

Coal seam gas activities with unacceptable impacts will not be approved by the NSW Government.

I recognise this is an important issue for residents of the Penrith electorate and I will continue to watch closely as this industry develops.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Ayres 5/2/13

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I still have concerns about this issue and will be watching closely to see the impacts of our policy changes.