

# GREG PETTY



Independent Candidate for Lord Mayor

## MEDIA RELEASE

Petty says:

**“No DA for CSG exploration or production will be approved in Wollongong on my watch”**

Independent Candidate for Lord Mayor, Greg Petty, was one of at least 4 Mayor Candidates at the recent Coal Seam Gas (CSG) seminar at Thirroul. Unlike other candidates, Mr. Petty is the only Lord Mayor candidate that has been active and taken a public stance on CSG.

Kirsty Ruddock, Principal Solicitor for the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) spoke of the legal challenges of CSG and the minefield and road blocks surrounding CSG legislation. However, as Mr. Petty discovered and Ms. Ruddock confirmed local government in the Illawarra does have authority on Development Applications.

STATE ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING POLICY (MINING, PETROLEUM PRODUCTION AND EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES) 2007 - REG 3A Consent confirms one such authority of Councils to approve DA's. Mr. Petty would use this section of the Act to reject DA's through Wollongong Council where deemed applicable.

A petition requesting protection from CSG in the Illawarra was recently submitted to Wollongong City Council. Council, as the Administrators failed to act, instead deferring the request to the State government. With a Premier that has publicly stated *“The future is gas”*, *“what hope do we have”* asked Mr. Petty.

Mr. Petty has applied on behalf of the affected Darkes Forest residents to the Department of Planning to reject the Apex Energy NL (APEX) 16<sup>th</sup> Borehole application. The basis of the application was incorrect scientific data presented in the Environmental Assessment (EA). Mr. Tom Fontaine from Ormil Energy Ltd told the CSG meeting that the company only used independent specialists and APEX had consulted with the community.

What Mr. Fontaine omitted to say was their specialist used in the preparation of the 16<sup>th</sup> Borehole application has admitted that the EA *“were incorrect as you identified at last Friday's meeting.....I accept full responsibility for missing those errors as I had actually reviewed that part of the EA before release”*. The community consultation meeting organised by Apex with the local Rural Fire Service (RFS) members related to a pipeline only – a pipeline that is not even part of the planned borehole approval – and as good corporate citizens, Apex then donated \$5,000 to the local RFS group.

Mr. Fontaine in his presentation was very careful to refer to a statement approved by the Department of Planning (DoP) saying Apex complied with all DoP guidelines. Chris Lawrence COO of APEX confirmed later that the DoP authorised the statement in response to the objection raised by the Darkes Forest residents.

The DoP failed to see the errors and inaccurate statements in the EA's from Apex for the exploration licenses. These errors were discovered by experts on behalf of the community which can lead to polluted water from drilling fluids flowing into the drinking water supply in Woronora Dam. The DoP has clearly failed its duty of care to the residents of NSW let alone its so called independent review of Exploration License applications. Who runs the Department of Planning? Answer, Exploration companies? They certainly don't answer to the community of NSW. *“Let's see if it (Department of Primary Industries) approves an application intended to protect the community”* asked Mr. Petty. It's not the community's role to find its own experts to show the errors in the approved documentation. The DoP has failed its duty to the community to evaluate the EA independently and in the community interest.

The DoP has abdicated its responsibilities by approving a faulty EA – the community has proven without the resources of experts which are available to the government. Are there other errors pertaining to these environmentally sensitive areas, what disasters could result from approved documentation after applying slipshod procedures within the petroleum and CSG industry biased approval processes?

Mr. Petty stated *“We had a disgraced Labor government approving CSG behind the communities back. Now we have the new Liberal government sharing sensitive community group objections and the DoP approving the content of a CSG miner’s slide show presentations”*. Mr. Lawrence further went on to imply the 16<sup>th</sup> borehole application would be approved by DoP, under new guidelines. *“Why wasn’t the community consulted or at least given the equal rights and access to the DoP”* asked Mr. Petty.

In an email to local residents Mr. Fontaine supported Mr. Lawrence’s comments *“The amended EA has been approved by the DPI. We’ve been told that the amended submission is being forwarded to ‘other departments’ for review, and will ultimately require approval from the office of the director general....We are advised that this will take 3-4 weeks. With politicians, contractors and teenagers - I usually double the time estimate. After this, the amended report will be available”*.

*“If the government wants to change the guidelines, the community demands a new environmental assessment and the opportunity to comment”* stated Mr. Petty especially as Mr. Fontaine believes *“CSG may not even be viable especially with new stringent guidelines”*.

Mr. Fontaine also needs to explain his comments *“CSG is not the future...has engaged experts in Spain currently exploring solar thermal”*, so why are they even exploring? His words *“this looks good – let’s get into CSG”* show an opportunistic company devoid of a social and moral conscious!

What however needs explanation is NSW Planning and Infrastructure letter of 22 August *“the modification application (16<sup>th</sup> borehole application) will be determined by the independent Planning Assessment Commission”*. Mr. Petty asks *“who do we believe, the Department, the petroleum company or are we dealing with pre-determined outcomes?”*

Finally the DoP contacted Ms. Dinsdale of the Darkes Forest Residents group only after the group wrote this stern email to the DoP: *“Apex Energy advised us yesterday (Mr. Chris Lawrence) that the 16th bore hole is approved. We find this totally unacceptable given the new information we provided regarding the Apex Energy EA report, misleading and false. Department of planning should be held responsible for this approval being given upon the letter of admission from Dr Steven Short that “he made a mistake” and takes full responsibility”. We as residents have decided to take this matter further and are seeking legal advice. We are appalled that we have not been contacted and given the opportunity to discuss this very important issue which threatens our whole life in Darkes Forest”*.

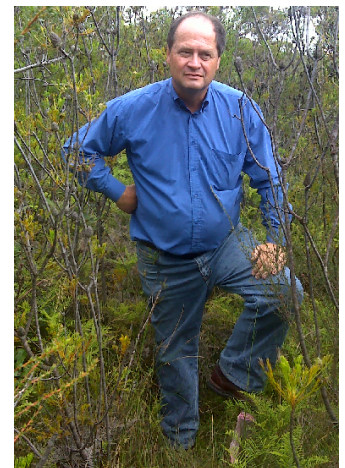
CSG is clearly part of the moral decay in this country and needs to be kept out of Wollongong.

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Links:

[Application to Department Planning re Errors in 16<sup>th</sup> Borehole Application](#)  
[Wollongong Petition for Motion to Rescind Petroleum Exploration Licences](#)



**Photo Borehole location**  
**Dharawal Nature Reserve February 2011**