



MEDIA RELEASE – James Harker-Mortlock – Independent for Hume - 12th March 2013

LIBERAL CANDIDATE OPENS DOOR FOR COAL SEAM GAS DEVELOPMENT

James Harker-Mortlock, independent candidate for the seat of Hume, made the following statement this morning: “I refer to the letter to the ‘Goulburn Post’ from the Liberal candidate for Hume dated March 11th 2013 in regard to coal seam gas mining.

The Liberal candidate appears once again to be at odds with his own party’s policy on the Renewable Energy Target, suggesting that it will *‘give us the wrong answer’*.

The Liberal candidate says that he welcomes the recent announcement by his colleagues in the NSW Liberal state government of a ban on coal seam gas mining within two kilometres of *‘residential areas’* and near strategic industry clusters such as the equine and viticulture industries.

However, the Liberal candidate leaves the door open for coal seam gas mining in rural and regional areas, such as exist in Hume and neighbouring electorates. The Liberal candidate states that much of the available gas resource is *‘in non-residential areas where aquifers and prime agricultural land are not threatened’*. How does he know? Especially when he himself goes on to say that the NSW Chief Scientist has been directed to prepare a report on where coal seam gas mining might be safe and on aquifer interference, presumably from coal seam gas mining.

The recent announcement by Planet Gas and Leichhardt Resources of the renewal by the NSW Liberal government of exploration licence PELs 469 Shoalhaven covering over 3173 square kilometres in the Illawarra, South Coast and Southern Highlands demonstrates how the NSW Liberal ban does nothing to protect rural and regional residents.

The Liberal candidate implies that the opponents of coal seam gas mining are driven by *‘hysteria’*. I would suggest that his position and that of his party is driven by political opportunism trying to shore up the Liberal vote in the Hunter and south-western Sydney and by their desire to protect the interests of Liberal Party supporters in the mining lobby.

What the Liberal candidate appears to be failing to understand is that many ordinary people do not like coal seam gas mining. Their common sense tells them that it is probably not a good idea.

Previously the Liberal candidate himself has expressed doubts about the technology. He now appears to be falling into line with the views of his party and his friends in the mining industry. In a

democracy, it is meant to be the people who decide, not special interest groups, such as the mining industry.

My position is that I am opposed to coal seam gas mining. My comprehensive policy in regard to coal seam gas mining may be found on my website. This policy was developed as a result of my work with the NSW Nationals Central Council Natural Resources and Energy Policy Committee.

In the unfortunate event that coal seam gas mining were allowed to proceed, there would need to be detailed regulations in place, not mere policy pronouncements, such as we have received from the NSW Liberal Party. These regulations would need to allow property owners to say no to coal seam gas mining on their land. The regulations would also need to ensure the protection of land owners hosting coal seam gas developments, their neighbours, the general community, the environment, our strategic agricultural lands, our strategic agricultural industry clusters and our precious aquifers.

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