



## **MEDIA RELEASE – James Harker-Mortlock – Independent for Hume – Tuesday 23rd April 2013**

### **LIBERAL CSG POLICY LOST IN TRANSLATION**

*"The Liberal Candidate for Hume's position on coal seam gas mining is contradictory and confusing."* James Harker-Mortlock, independent candidate for Hume, said this morning.

*"Last week the Liberal Candidate for Hume issued a media release in response to my earlier media release of 9<sup>th</sup> April calling upon him to make his Party's position clear on CSG mining. However, rather than making the position clear, he has muddied the waters further. The Liberal Candidate indicated that he supported 'the importance of protecting aquifers, prime agricultural land and residential areas from coal seam gas activity'.*

*However, whilst the NSW State Liberal Party has stated that coal seam gas mining will not take place in 'residential areas' it is unclear exactly what is meant by 'residential'. In addition, most of Wingecarribee and Wollondilly, along with the rest of the electorate of Hume, consist of rural areas - leaving residents exposed to the possibility of coal seam gas mining taking place on their land.*

*In his media release, the Liberal Candidate states that his position is 'in line with Liberal party policy, as outlined by the shadow minister for energy, Ian Macfarlane.' However, Mr. Macfarlane is quoted recently in the North Queensland Register of 20<sup>th</sup> April making the following comments :*

***Federal energy spokesman Ian Macfarlane said the CSG industry in NSW "is in serious trouble".***

***"There will be jobs lost from Newcastle to Wollongong if we don't secure sufficient supplies to run industry in NSW in 2016."***

***Mr Macfarlane said the government, consumers and producers had to team up and "resist the blatant political protests" going on to stop CSG in areas outside residential areas.***

***"If they don't then they are part of the problem," he said.***

*The Liberal Candidate also states : 'there is no shortage of gas (conventional and non-conventional) away from sensitive areas, especially in far western Queensland, Northern South Australia, Bass Strait and offshore of Gippsland.'*

*However, Mr. MacFarlane is quoted in Platt's on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2013 as saying :*

***The future of the coal seam gas industry in New South Wales is under serious threat, leaving the domestic gas market in the eastern Australian state in danger of running out of supplies by 2016, federal shadow resources and energy minister Ian Macfarlane said Friday.***

*Mr MacFarlane went on to say :*

***Unlike the thriving CSG industry in Queensland, which now employs more than 27,000 people and has signed 3,500 landholder agreements, the sector in NSW has been "brought to its knees," by "civil disobedience to the point of anarchy," Macfarlane told The Energy State of the Nation conference in Sydney.***

*and*

***Macfarlane dubbed CSG "the most regulated industry in Australia," and said that if the coalition was elected in the federal election due to be held in September 2013, he would seek to cut red tape around environmental approvals by delegating the process to the state government authorities. "A four-year process for environmental approvals is simply not acceptable," he said. The coalition would aim for an approval process that would take less than two years, the former minister added.***

AAP on 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2013 quoted Mr. MacFarlane as stating the following :

**He said the NSW government had allowed "anarchy" to prevail and prevent legitimate operations to drill gas wells. He also criticised the government for subjecting the industry to the strictest controls in Australia and excessive red tape. "The reality is that Queensland has progressed the industry at a high rate, and they're reaping the benefits," Mr Macfarlane said. "Instead of drilling 1000 wells each year, they've (NSW) built just one well in two years.**

Perhaps the most 'interesting' statement made by Mr. MacFarlane was to the ABC on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2013 :

**"In terms of New South Wales, I've been saying for 18 months, particularly to the industry, the concept of drilling under people's homes - I mean, at this stage, there just isn't that level of confidence.**

**So I think the industry needs to step out of the more densely populated areas, allow the two kilometre buffer zone to be set up, get out of the Hunter, get out of the central north coast, go up into the areas where they can sit down with farmers and landholders, come to an agreement where money changes hands and the science is much more secure, and companies like Santos are doing that.**

**But in the more highly populated areas, particularly where there are small players, particularly where those small players don't have the wherewithal to go out and consult with the community and also ensure they've done the science, the community is quite rightly alarmed."**

Apparently Mr. MacFarlane's view is that money changing hands, especially when it is provided by a major corporation, means the science is more secure. Really? In that same interview Mr. MacFarlane does refer to the need to obtain a land holder's permission and to protect strategic agricultural lands, plus the need for a 2km buffer zone around population centres of more than 1,000 – however, as Mr. MacFarlane well knows, these are State and not Federal planning responsibilities.

In the area where the Commonwealth does have power, in regard to the environmental aspects of developments, Mr. MacFarlane was less keen, telling the Australian Financial Review on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2013, as referenced in "Stock & Land' of that same date :

**THE federal Coalition has warned that any move by Environment Minister Tony Burke to toughen environmental laws to give him more power to intervene in state assessments of coal seam gas would face a constitutional challenge. Coalition energy and resources spokesman Ian Macfarlane said there was already ample opportunity for the Minister to get involved in project approvals and there was no case to expand those powers under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.**

**"It's not necessary and it would be challenged under the constitution," Mr Macfarlane told The Australian Financial Review**

As recently as 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2013 when speaking at a gas conference in Sydney, Mr. MacFarlane stated :

**"The solution will not come from people in the industry talking about reservations, it will not come from governments saying the industry needs to go out and establish its social credentials with the community, it will not come when we allow anarchy to prevent legitimate operations."**

*Perhaps before creating false impressions in the minds of the voters of Hume, the Liberal Candidate should remain in radio contact with his Liberal Party masters. Or perhaps he is suffering poor reception, because whatever he was being told has been lost in the translation which he has provided to voters. Far from supporting rural residents, Mr. MacFarlane and the Liberal Party's position is that those living in rural areas who oppose coal seam gas mining are 'part of the problem' and are encouraging 'civil disobedience to the point of anarchy'. I would suggest that if anyone is being hysterical, it is not the opponents of CSG, as the Liberal Candidate has suggested previously, but members of the Liberal Party responding to the demands of their corporate constituency which wishes to impose coal seam gas mining on rural communities.*

*I have stated already my opposition to coal seam gas mining. I have also a comprehensive policy on providing safeguards in the event that a government may wish to proceed with coal seam gas mining."*

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