



MEDIA RELEASE – James Harker-Mortlock – Independent for Hume – Tuesday 30th April 2013

CSG – THE PEOPLE DON'T WANT IT – IT'S TIME FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY TO LISTEN UP

"The people have spoken. They do not want coal seam gas mining. Period" said James Harker-Mortlock, independent candidate for Hume this morning.

"Last night I attended the community consultation meeting held in the Wollondilly Shire Hall, Picton. The meeting was attended by many local residents. Also in attendance were the mayor, local councillors, council officers and the local state MP for Wollondilly, Jai Rowell. A panel consisting of a scientist, two coal seam gas industry representatives and a community activist made presentations.

During the course of the meeting, the local MP Jai Rowell and the Liberal Candidate for Hume, Angus Taylor, attempted to create the impression that the Liberal Party as a whole is concerned about the community's feelings in regard to CSG. Unfortunately, it is clear from their actions and their statements that both the State Liberal Party Government and the Federal Liberal Energy and Resources spokesman, Ian MacFarlane, are advocates of the coal seam gas industry. No attempts by the local MP for Wollondilly or the Liberal Candidate for Hume to create another impression can cover up the cold hard reality – when the mining industry plays the tune, the Liberal Party dances to it.

After some hours of presentations and questions the meeting was asked if anyone supported coal seam gas exploration and mining in catchment areas – no hands were raised. The meeting was unanimous in its opposition to coal seam gas exploration and mining in catchment areas.

The argument is over. The coal seam gas industry and the state and federal governments must respond to the demands of the people and stop coal seam gas mining and exploration immediately. This is not a matter for ongoing debate or attempts to explain to the people why coal seam gas is good for them. The terms of reference provided to the Chief Scientist of NSW to investigate the coal seam gas industry appear to be designed around an acceptance that coal seam gas mining will proceed – this is not what the people want.

Rather than telling people what they have to accept, the Liberal Party should work on ways to correct the clear failure of the market whereby a significant amount of the massive resources of gas available in many different parts of Australia, including the natural gas which NSW has been receiving from South Australia since 1976, is planned to be shipped offshore, as stated by the AGL representative at the meeting. This is another case of the corporatist interest being allowed to run amok at the expense of the people. The Liberal Party appears to be suggesting that because of its own unwillingness to intervene in a supposedly 'free market', and the failure of governments of all persuasions to plan sensibly for Australia's energy needs, then the residents of New South Wales should accept that their amenity of life, their property values, their rich agricultural lands and their precious water resources should all be sacrificed in the interests of the coal seam gas industry. An industry which would not necessarily even have a reason to exist if proper energy planning were in place. The Liberal Party members and supporters need to listen up – the people don't accept their arguments on CSG.

After the meeting in Picton, I am more resolved than ever to maintain my already stated opposition to coal seam gas mining."

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