

Coal seam gas is digging up chaos

EDITORIAL

By **ELIZABETH AVERY, DANTE DEJONG** and **LUKE PARKER**

DO we risk poisoning our waterways to try and make our environment cleaner?

The mind boggles when researching the pros and cons of coal seam gas mining.

Coal seam gas is one of the planet's natural resources and is found deep within the earth's surface.

Mining companies send large pipes deep underground and use chemicals and pressure to break up coal to draw up the gas.

At the end of the production cycle, the gas is chilled into liquefied natural gas (LNG) for use in electricity production.

During the process, thousands of litres of water are used; this water becomes permanently toxic. This toxic water is then stored in a special lake.

It reminds me of an episode of *The Simpsons* – something so ridiculous that it could only happen in cartoons.

AGL has approval to mine 110 wells in the Gloucester Basin, with more to come. The Gloucester Basin flows directly into the Manning River. If something goes marginally wrong with the mining process, the entire river system is

destroyed, leaving 120,000 users at risk of being poisoned.

The animals, the plant life, the farming will have to cease, and what then? Do we move on because the Manning Valley has been destroyed by mining?

Federal minister Tony Bourke has given AGL conditional approval to forge ahead with the mining project.

Robert Milliken, from *Inside Story*, reported that Gloucester councillor Aled Hogget said "the decision reinforces our view that the interest of our community members are being disregarded".

Cr Hogget and five of his fellow councillors have sent an open letter to the state and federal political parties making a plea that further development of coal seam gas mining be stopped until the impact can be assessed.

AGL states that coal seam gas is a cleaner source of energy for the environment. Electricity is becoming outrageously expensive for families and coal seam gas will enable AGL to provide consumers with a cheaper rate. The risks for chemical leakage are extremely low but it seems the benefits are high for Australians.

Peter Epov, chairman of the Manning Alliance, said: "The process poses great threats to our pristine waterways."

So if coal seam gas mining goes ahead, what then happens when it runs out? Do we move to Mars?



Cartoon: Joel Christensen



RESTORE: Faith Saunders and Georgina Saad learning about the Gathang language from Uncle Jeremy Saunders and artist Mandy Davis.
Picture: Georgia Martin

Rebirth of an ancient voice

By **FAITH SAUNDERS** and **GEORGINA SAAD**

THANKS to the commitment of the local Taree Aboriginal community, the Gathang language of the Biripi, Worimi and Guringay people is now an accredited TAFE course and Aboriginal people of the Manning Valley are enrolling.

During the early 1900s Aboriginal people were forced to live on missions where their language was forbidden. As generations passed, speakers of the Gathang language became fewer until it was almost lost.

In 1964, Nils Holmer came to speak to the elders at Purfleet, a mission on the outskirts of Taree. He recorded

the elders speaking Gathang.

Mr Holmer translated the Gathang language into English and almost 50 years later, these recordings were the basis for the creation of the Gathang language dictionary.

Muurrbay, the Aboriginal Language Co-operative, and the Gathang Language Group worked together for seven years to collect records of the language.

Gathang teacher Jeremy Saunders said: "It's important to teach this to our children so that our language is never forgotten. Our language connects us to our country."

Biripi, Worimi and Guringay people are now training to become teachers to take Gathang into schools.

A new town purpose-built for new people

By **CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR** AND **DANE WALLIS**

TAREE mayor Paul Hogan has high expectations for the establishment of a new town called Brimbin, which will be eight kilometres from Taree on the NSW mid-north coast.

Since the 1980s, 3700 hectares near Taree has been earmarked for the development.

Extensive woodlands are also located on the site, much of which will be protected, including a substantial addition to the Brimbin Nature Reserve.

When asked if the infrastructure of a new town will affect the land, Cr Hogan said: "It will be completely safe for animals and plants."

"Before construction begins they will check for any rare and endangered species," he said.

Brimbin will cater for more than 8000 residents and provide 10,000 jobs.

Cr Hogan said: "this an exciting time for the Taree shire, it is very rare to establish a new town."



FUTURE: The large dam which will become the town centre feature of Brimbin.

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