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# 'Disempower' plant



**UNAWARE:** The closest neighbours to AGL's proposed Dalton Gas Fired Power Station, John Edwards and Maryanne Johnstone, say they were never given the opportunity to make a submission to the NSW Department of Planning.

## Couple's Dalton retirement dreams in tatters

By **TOM SEBO**

**J**OHN Edwards and Maryanne Johnstone's dream to retire in Dalton is in tatters after Planning NSW recommended energy giant AGL be allowed to build a \$1.5 billion gas fired power station next to their property.

The couple say they were not given the opportunity to have their say on the development because of a failure by the compa-

ny to inform them of the public consultation period.

"I'm disappointed that the process has gone so far without either myself or my wife being part of the process," Mr Edwards said.

"We feel disempowered, we feel as if we haven't been involved and therefore like it isn't just or fair.

"(And) It all goes back to AGL's failure to contact us and notify us of the consultation period ... The critical phase in any planning

development is the consultation process.

"We are the nearest neighbour, we're literally 200m from their gate and because we weren't notified of the consultation process by AGL we weren't able to make a submission."

When the couple first inspected the property in 2009 they were warned by their agent that AGL had purchased the adjacent block of land.

Concerned, they asked their solicitor to look into it. They were

advised by all relevant authorities, including Upper Lachlan Shire Council, that no projects were planned.

They were told that energy companies owned land all over the State and that ownership doesn't necessarily equate to development.

So, they purchased their dream block for \$450,000, with the intension of using their superannuation and assets to pay it off.

They also intended to build a house on the property and retire

to Dalton. However, the couple live in Bathurst and when AGL finally made its intentions known they were not notified.

The proposal went on public exhibition on August 17, 2011, and concluded on September 19, the same year.

By the time the couple found out about it the deadline for submissions had already expired.

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