

Mayoral Column 10/4/12

Ashfield council says no to coal seam gas mining

You may be surprised (as I was) to find out that the state government has awarded a Petroleum Exploration Licence (463) over 2,392 sq km of the Cumberland Plain which includes *the entire Ashfield Council area* to Dart Energy. The company has recently been granted approval by the Department of Primary Industries to conduct exploratory coal seam gas (CSG) drilling in St Peters in the City of Sydney LGA . They have also indicated their intention to seek further drilling sites within the Sydney metropolitan area.

Coal seam gas (CSG) mining or 'fracking' is expanding in NSW in spite of the growing concern about the negative impact on underground water in terms of supply and contamination. It also generates significant waste water and requires a large number of heavy vehicle movements to support drilling and waste removal.

Council is very concerned about contamination in Ashfield as a result of any CSG mining. This is not an unfounded worry - there have been recent reports of fugitive emissions from the coal seam gas operations in the Pilliga forest in western NSW. In February, Santos admitted to contamination of the forest as a result of CSG mining. Commentary on the Santos report by Stop Pilliga Coal Seam Gas group can be found at their website <http://www.stoppilligacoalseamgas.com.au/> and makes for chilling reading.

At the most recent Council meeting we were in agreement that Ashfield opposes coal seam gas exploration and mining until it can be proved to be sustainable and not interfere with aquifers. We also resolved to call on the Premier of NSW to ban Coal Seam Gas Mining and Exploration entirely in the Sydney basin. We are seeking the support of our local members of parliament (both state and federal) for Council's position.

Ashfield will now join other Councils in NSW in campaigning on this matter and will be vigilant in scrutinizing the environmental protection measures and community consultation process to be put in place by the NSW government .

Mayor Lyall Kennedy