



## The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

Mr Sean Gough  
Wollombi Valley Against Gas Extraction  
c/- General Store  
WOLLOMBI NSW 2325

28 AUG 2008

Dear Mr Gough

Thank you for your letter of 21 July 2008 concerning coal seam methane gas exploration in the Wollombi Valley. Thank you also for your invitation to attend a public meeting on the matter on 9 August, which I was unable to attend.

Mineral exploration and exploitation is principally a state government issue and is most often assessed under state government legislation. Only if a mining activity is likely to have a significant impact on matters of national environmental significance under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) might the Australian Government become involved.

The matters of national environmental significance relevant to the EPBC Act are:

- World heritage properties;
- National heritage places;
- Wetlands of international importance (Ramsar wetlands);
- Threatened species and ecological communities;
- Migratory species;
- Commonwealth marine areas; and
- Nuclear actions (including uranium mining).

In this instance, it would be the responsibility of the consortium of Sydney Gas Operations Pty Ltd and AGL Gas Production Pty Ltd or any other proponent to consider carefully the likelihood of significant impact on the matters of national environmental significance. If there is any such likelihood, the proponent should refer the activity to my Department to be considered under the EPBC Act.

All actions that are referred for assessment under the EPBC Act are placed on my Department's website for public comment, however at this time there has not been a referral received under the EPBC Act for any actions relating to exploration or extraction of coal seam gas in the Wollombi Valley or the Sydney Basin.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Peter Garrett', written over the typed name.

Peter Garrett