

# THE FAULT LINE

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is Coalbed Methane Gas?**

Methane is a natural gas held in coal seams.

Methane has no smell, is flammable, explosive and causes suffocation in enclosed spaces.

Methane is the gas that canaries were traditionally used to detect in underground coalmines.

Methane is a potent greenhouse gas, with 21 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide. Coalmines have to degas the coal before mining and traditionally burn off the methane.

The coalbed methane gas industry is new and there are uncertain risks associated with it.

The NSW Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991, governing the coalbed methane gas industry in NSW, is not designed for methane gas extraction and is heavily weighed in favour of the miners.

### **Is Methane better than coal?**

Yes it is.

Methane produces about 60% of the carbon emissions that coal does for the same energy output when burnt in a power station.

There is a strong case for harnessing the methane from coalmines instead of burning it off.

Coalbed Methane Gas is not "clean energy" and does not stop global warming.

### **How is Methane extracted from Coal?**

Coal seams are water aquifers.

Methane is held in the coal under water pressure.

The water has to first be extracted from the coal seam, removing the pressure, which allows the methane to flow from the coal.

The methane flows to the wellhead on the surface under its own pressure (+/- 50psi), and then continues to flow along a small pipeline to a compressor station which compresses the gas into a large, high-pressure pipeline.

A typical methane gas field can consist of 200 wellheads in an area of +/- 40 square kilometres, or one wellhead in every 50 acres, each with its own pipeline.

One Compressor Station would service the gas field and can be no more than 30 kilometres from the furthest wellhead.



# THE FAULT LINE

What are the risks?

The water extracted from the coal seam is saline and contains very high levels of heavy metals. If allowed to contaminate the surrounding environment, it will poison the soil and waterways.

The volume of water to be removed from the coal seam cannot be predicted, but will take anything from 3 to 18 months per wellhead and requires large numbers of truck movements per week. The number of trucks per week depends on the pressure of the water flow, which also cannot be predicted.

Removing such a large volume of water from the coal seam aquifer, which lays at about 400m deep in Broke, may cause shallower groundwater aquifers or watercourses such as Wollombi Brook to be drained down to the now dry coal seam aquifer. The Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Authority reports that Wollombi Brook is already severely stressed by drought.

When the methane gas is free to flow from the coal seam it may find pathways to the surface through natural fractures in the overlying rock. This has happened in Australia and overseas where it poisons the soil, bubbles up in creeks, through bores and even finds it way up into buildings.

Methane will leak from pipelines that are damaged or fail under pressure.

The Compressor Station is a large and noisy installation and can only be built on land zoned for industrial use.

We believe that a gas field development in the Wollombi Valley would devastate every local business connected with tourism, would devalue property and reduce employment for local tradesmen. Sydney Gas has confirmed they would not pay any compensation for these losses.

Are we alone?

No we are not. In NSW, other communities are facing the same sort of problems with Methane Gas miners in Broke and Gloucester/Stroud, as are many communities in Canada and USA. See our web site for details [www.wage.org.au](http://www.wage.org.au)

What can we do?

Become an active member of WAGE at [www.wage.org.au](http://www.wage.org.au) or sign up at the Wollombi General Store or at Laguna Wine Bar.

**If you want to know more then we will meet at:  
Laguna Wine Bar Tuesday 9th September 2008 at 5.00pm  
Wollombi Tavern Friday 12th September 2008 at 5.00pm**

**Do not allow anyone from Sydney Gas, AGL Energy & AJ Lucas  
onto your land**

Do not sign anything they put in front of you

