

MEDIA RELEASE 6TH AUGUST 2012

Gunnedah Health Forum - Community calls for no negative health impacts

“Undermining Our Health” Community Forum was held in Gunnedah on 4th August and attracted over 100 participants to hear information on the risks to health from coal seam gas extraction and expanded coal mining in the Gunnedah Basin. Mr Tony Windsor MP opened the forum, congratulating the community on this initiative to take responsibility for their own health and offering his support and assistance wherever possible.

The community heard detailed data from Dr Mariann Lloyd-Smith, (National Toxics Network) on environmental health concerns presented by coal seam gas extraction with chemical use, water, salt and drilling muds, air pollution, methane and increase in earth tremors. She also highlighted Santos own statement “drawdown of groundwater heads in coal seam aquifers is an unavoidable impact” (Santos GLNH 2009) in her information on CSG’s treatment of water resources.

The impact of coal dust on asthma and cancer rates was highlighted in presentations from Dr van Steenis (UK) and Mrs Wendy Bowman, Hunter Valley.

A number of participants remarked that they were shocked to realize the number of chemicals used in these industries, their longevity and the levels at which these chemicals are injurious to human, animal, plant and soil health.

Dr Ben Harris-Roxas, University of NSW highlighted the importance of establishing a Health Impact Assessment in the Gunnedah Basin.

Forum Resolutions

1. “The communities of the Gunnedah basin are not prepared to accept negative health outcomes from any coal or CSG developments in the basin. We demand that projects must demonstrate positive health outcomes prior to approval”.
2. “We give our community a license to act: to form a scoping committee to develop a HIA. (Committee to comprise of 10 members from across the basin); the North West Alliance will accept applications closing 31 August; the first scoping meeting will be set mid Sept with the UNSW”
3. “This meeting calls on the NSW state govt to support the Gunnedah Health Impact Assessment initiative by committing to a community cabinet meeting to be held in Gunnedah at the end of Sept or ASAP.”

The forum called for “a Health Impact Assessment to be conducted within the Gunnedah Basin with full community involvement to assess the individual and cumulative project effects of the impact of coal and coal seam gas, with support by all levels of government to insure a thorough study is conducted and responded to appropriately by our governments”.

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