

The Premier, Hon Mike Baird  
GPO Box 5341  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Premier Baird,

**RE: Please Protect Our Northern Rivers**

I call on you to resolve a dangerous threat to the Northern Rivers community and the future of democracy in New South Wales.

Minister Roberts appears set to use massive police force to impose the inappropriate operations of a speculative gas mining company onto an unwilling community.

Metgasco has no social licence to operate in the Northern Rivers. Local opposition to gasfield industrialisation is widespread, well informed, and very determined.

Metgasco has political clout due, in part, to its employing Richard Shields, a former director of the NSW Liberal Party, and Stuart George, the son of National Party member Thomas George. Metgasco's exploration licences were granted during the Obeid/McDonald era and were renewed by ex-Minister Hartcher. They are now the responsibility of Minister Roberts.

Minister Roberts defends the "rights" of one company and one farmer to profit, but says nothing about the rights of our children to live in a safe and unpolluted environment, the rights of citizens to a level economic playing field that protects businesses and property values, or the rights of the community to clean water and air.

The well at Bentley is Metgasco's second attempt to drill down 2.3 km to a sandstone formation - a depth equivalent to 17 times the distance from the water to the top of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Because the Bentley well targets a sandstone formation, Metgasco's operation is exempt from NSW Government CSG regulations, and only requires Minister Roberts' approval.

Metgasco has a 100% rate of failure for tight sands gas wells. Kingfisher, Metgasco's only other tight sands well, leaked from the start, failed dramatically during decommissioning when 200 m of bore pipe was blown high into the air, and is subject to ongoing investigation by the NSW Trade and Investment Mine Safety Investigation Unit.

Metgasco does not yet know what went wrong with their Kingfisher tight sands well, and now they plan to drill a similar well before the Mine Safety investigation is completed. No one knows whether the Kingfisher well failed due to flaws in technology, materials, management, work practices, or other factors. The well is now capped, but will forevermore allow gases and fluids from different geological strata to mix in an uncontrollable and unknowable manner.

In light of recent ICAC revelations, it is disturbing that, in Metgasco's interests, Minister Roberts is determined to fast track the Bentley well and use NSW police at great expense to the taxpayer before the findings of the Mine Safety investigation are released.

Commonsense and good governance demand that the Government immediately suspend Metgasco's operations at Bentley.

As Premier, you confront a dilemma. You must chose either the extreme, radical plan of the gas companies to turn the Northern Rivers into gas fields, or the conservative, responsible option, supported by the majority of citizens, of protecting the enduring wealth created by our thriving communities, precious natural environments, and productive industries.

It is up to you how history will record your legacy.

Yours sincerely,

Name:

Address: