



ELECTORAL MINING HOTSPOTS

Actions taken by the NSW Government over the last four years to promote coal and gas mining at the expense of land, water and communities

Tamworth

Approved the Shenhua Watermark coal mine on Liverpool Plains
Renewed a CSG licence on the Liverpool Plains, allowed others to continue across the Plains

Barwon

Memorandum of Understanding signed for Narrabri Gas Project
CSG pilot wells approved in Great Artesian Basin recharge area
Approved the Maules Creek coal mine

Upper Hunter

Approved fracking at Gloucester just 700m from homes.
Approved Rio Tinto's Warkworth coal mine expansion
Look set to allow destruction of Bulga township

Goulburn

Approved coal exploration in farmland and drinking water catchment

Northern Rivers (Lismore, Ballina, Tweed)
Renewed 3 major gas exploration licences
Announced gas production licence near Casino

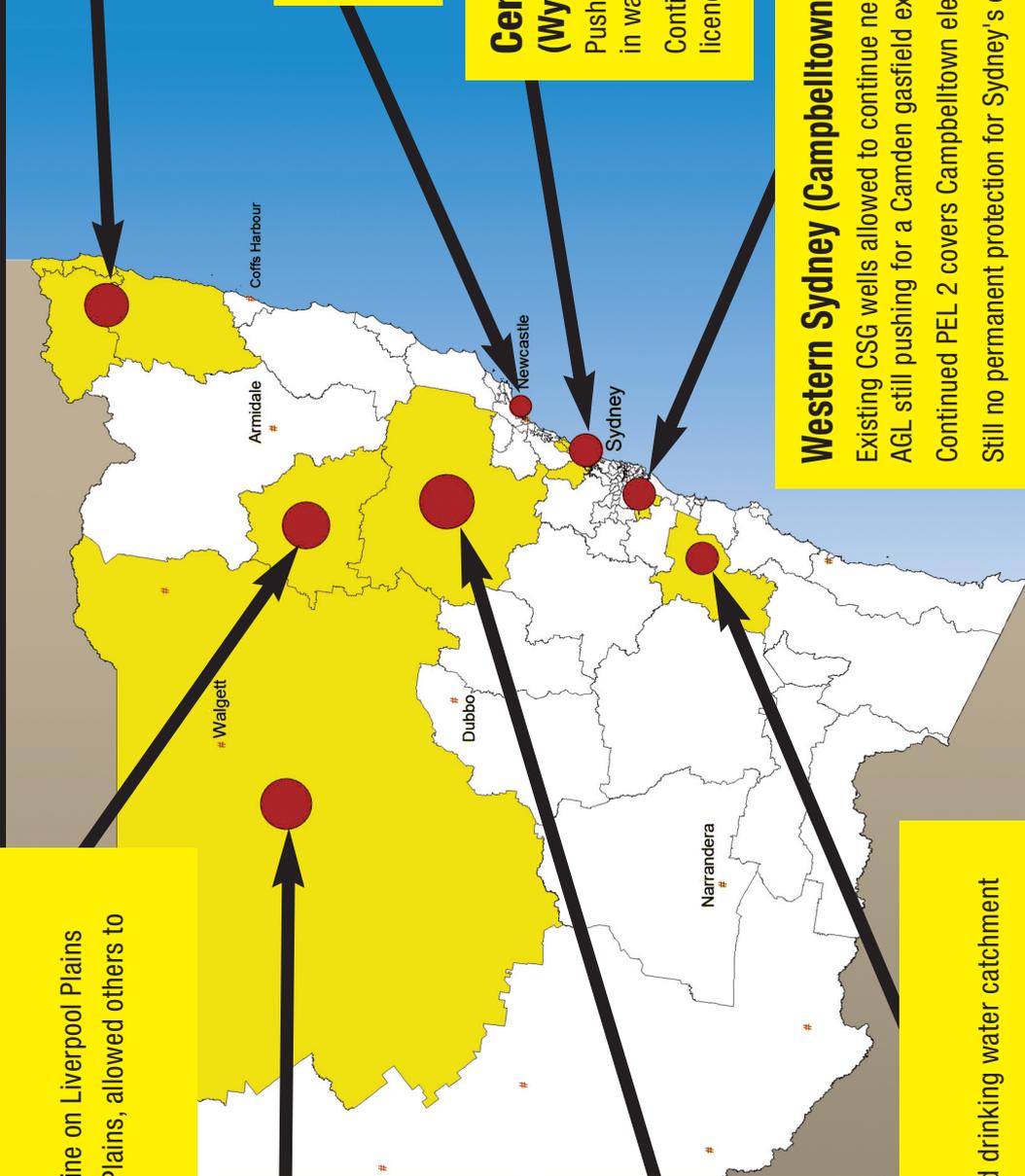
Port Stephens
Failed to cancel gas licence over Fullerton Cove

Central Coast (Wyong, Gosford)

Pushing for Wallarah 2 coal mine in water catchment
Continued PEL 2 coal seam gas licence over Gosford hinterland

Western Sydney (Campbelltown, Camden, Wollondilly)

Existing CSG wells allowed to continue near and under homes;
AGL still pushing for a Camden gasfield expansion
Continued PEL 2 covers Campbelltown electorate
Still no permanent protection for Sydney's drinking water catchment





MINING HOTSPOTS - #NSWVOTES 2015

Ahead of this New South Wales State Election, there are parts of the state where coal and unconventional gas mining are electrifying the public debate.

The Electoral Mining Hotspots map shows the most controversial decisions the NSW Government has taken on coal and gas mining issues over the last term, across 12 different electorates. The map is a snapshot of the last term of the NSW Government on these issues in key seats.

The briefing below expands on that snapshot, to provide a more detailed summary of not just the record of the parties, but the promises they have made, in the lead-up to the NSW election on March 28th. The summary focuses in on four regions which cover 11 controversial electorates.

Northern Rivers: Ballina, Lismore, Tweed

The electorates of Ballina, Lismore and Tweed may change hands due to CSG issues. Popular resistance to gas mining has been growing across the region since 2012, and one year ago this election, thousands of people peacefully blockaded a tight gas exploration drilling project and protected the region by peaceful direct action.

All local councils have passed resolutions against coal seam gas mining in the region, and a local council poll in Lismore found that 87% of people were opposed to the industry. More than 142 communities have declared themselves 'gasfield free' after a grassroots democracy process, with 95.3% of citizens choosing to be gasfield free.

NATIONAL PARTY: The National Party candidates for Ballina, Lismore & Tweed have failed to answer any of the questions put to them by Gasfield Free Northern Rivers. The Coalition Government has renewed the 3 major gas licences in the region over the last 4 years, and also announced a production licence near Casino. Dart Energy have just sold one of the major gas licences to drilling company AJ Lucas. Two small, non-contentious licences have been cancelled.

LABOR PARTY: The ALP has promised to keep the Northern Rivers free of unconventional gas and to cancel all current licences. In Government prior to 2011, the ALP approved a number of licences in the region.

THE GREENS: The Greens have a policy to keep the Northern Rivers free of unconventional gas and to cancel all current licences, as well as implementing a permanent state-wide ban on unconventional gas mining.

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS: The Christian Democratic Party has pledged to support a five year moratorium on all coal seam gas across the state.

Western Sydney: Camden, Campbelltown, Wollondilly

Western Sydney hosts the only active coal seam gas production field in New South Wales, AGL's Camden gasfield. Most of Campbelltown and Camden electorates are covered by coal seam gas exploration or production licences, and AGL has told residents it still intends to expand the field. Despite Sydney Catchment Authority opposition, the Special Areas of Sydney's drinking water catchment remain open to both coal seam gas and coal mining.

LIBERAL PARTY: In 2013, the NSW Government introduced a 2km exclusion zone on CSG to prevent it encroaching on residential zones. However, homes outside 'zoned' residential areas only have a 200m buffer, and there are no constraints on existing gas wells that are located very close to homes and were drilled under suburbs. The NSW Government is allowing the Russell Vale colliery in the drinking water catchment to progress through the planning process. The Government has cancelled three licences in the drinking water catchment, but there is still a licence across large areas (PEL2).

LABOR PARTY: The ALP has promised a 'moratorium' on coal seam gas and to ban it in Sydney's Special Catchment Areas, and have recently stated that they will not allow an expansion of the Camden Gasfield. The duration of the ALP 'moratorium' is unclear. They have also stated that "operations found to be risking community health will be closed until they can be proven to be safe." The ALP appears to support continued coal mining, expansions and new mines in Sydney's drinking water catchment.

THE GREENS: The Greens have adopted a policy for a permanent ban on coal seam gas drilling and development and have called for an end to coal mining in Sydney's drinking water catchment. The Greens proposed a bill during this last term of Parliament to prohibit mining projects and prevent licence renewals in seven water catchment areas, including the Central Coast.

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS: The Christian Democratic Party has pledged to support a five year moratorium on all coal seam gas across the state. Their policy on coal mining in drinking water catchments is uncertain.

Central Coast: Wyong, Gosford

The Central Coast was the centre of political donations scandals in this term of Government that implicated a local mining project, the Wallarah 2 coal mine, which threatens the drinking water catchment of Wyong. The region has current coal seam gas exploration licences across large areas, but a house-to-house direct democratic survey conducted during 2014 found that 98.2% of people in the area oppose coal seam gas activity. Wyong and Gosford councils have both unanimously passed resolutions reaffirming the respective council's stance against coal seam gas.

LIBERAL PARTY: During the last election campaign the then Liberal Party leader Barry O'Farrell promised to prohibit mining in drinking water catchments, but this promise was never fulfilled. The Coalition Government has actively promoted the approval of the Wallarah 2 coal mine. The Government recently announced the cancellation of a minor, inactive gas licence - PEL 463 - but the major licence, PEL2, remains in place, as does PEL5.

LABOR PARTY: The Labor Party has publicly opposed the Wallarah 2 mine, and rejected an earlier mine proposal of the same name in the last term of the Keneally Government. The Labor Party has a policy to suspend all CSG exploration licences until the Chief Scientist recommendations have been implemented, although there are few details provided on how that will be implemented.

THE GREENS: The Greens proposed a bill during this last term of Parliament to prohibit mining projects and prevent licence renewals in seven water catchment areas, including the Central Coast. The Greens are opposed to all CSG drilling in NSW and have a policy to implement a permanent ban.

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS: The Christian Democratic Party has pledged to support a five year moratorium on all coal seam gas across the state. Their policy on coal mining is uncertain.

North West: Tamworth, Barwon, Upper Hunter

In the North West, coal mining and coal seam gas are alarming farming communities and altering the political landscape. The Maules Creek coal mine in the electorate of Barwon has been subjected to relentless peaceful protest since construction began in December 2013 and hundreds of people have been arrested there, including local farmers and conservationist, sports stars and music stars. The next coal mine proposed for the region is the controversial Watermark mine on the Liverpool Plains, in the Tamworth electorate. Santos have a proposal for a 750 well coal seam gas production project in the Pilliga, and plans to expand gas production to other parts of the North West, including the Liverpool Plains, and farmers are up in arms about the risk to groundwater and impacts on farming systems. The electorate of Upper Hunter is polarised by mining issues and hosts both the Gloucester coal seam gas project and the controversial Mount Thorley Warkworth coal mine expansion.

NATIONAL PARTY: The National Party candidates for these electorates have not responded to questions from the community about coal and gas mining policy. The Upper Hunter candidate is vocally supporting the Warkworth expansion, and other controversial coal projects, and the National Party in Government has allowed the Shenhua Watermark coal mine on the Liverpool Plains to be approved.

The NSW Government has implemented a set of Critical Industry Clusters which exclude CSG mining in the Hunter, but which do not extend to the north-west. The Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Santos to promote the Narrabri Gasfield which will drill through the Great Artesian Basin recharge aquifer. A number of gas licences have been renewed in the region. The National Party in government recently approved fracking within 700m of homes at Gloucester, and changed the regulations so that there was no Environmental Impact Statement required. The Coalition Government has indicated they have plans to 'crack down' on farmers and other citizens who oppose mining, with heavy penalties including possible gaol terms.

LABOR PARTY: The party did not respond to questions from the community about coal and gas policy. The party has been silent on both the Warkworth coal mine expansion and the Shenhua Watermark coal mine approval. Labor granted the original exploration licence to Shenhua Watermark while in office, and the former Federal Labor Government approved the Maules Ck coal mine. The ALP has promised to repeal the controversial "resource significance" clause of the Mining SEPP and to re-write the flawed Biodiversity Offsets policy on major projects. The Labor Party has announced a policy to suspend coal seam gas exploration licences pending implementation of the Chief Scientist recommendations, but it is unclear how this will affect the proposed Narrabri Gas Project which is covered by an assessment lease. The Labor Party in government approved the Gloucester Gas production project in a rush in the lead-up to the last state election in 2011. It is unclear how their current policy impacts on the project.

THE GREENS: The Greens have opposed the Shenhua Watermark and Warkworth coal mines, and released a policy to phase out coal mining. They are opposed to all coal seam gas in New South Wales, and have indicated they will support no-go areas for mining, restoration of merits appeal rights, and respect for the Gasfield free declarations.

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS: The Christian Democrat candidates for Barwon and Upper Hunter answered a questionnaire indicating their willingness to support no-go areas for mining, restoration of merits appeal rights, respect for the Gasfield free declarations and indicating their opposition to the Shenhua Watermark mine and the Narrabri Gasfield.

INDEPENDENTS PETER DRAPER (TAMWORTH) AND ROHAN BOEHM (BARWON): Peter Draper and Rohan Boehm have both indicated their support for no-go areas for mining, restoration of merits appeal rights, and respect for the Gasfield free declarations, as well as stating their opposition to the Shenhua Watermark mine and the Narrabri Gasfield.

INDEPENDENT LEE WATTS (UPPER HUNTER): Lee Watts has indicated support for restoring merits appeal rights, respecting Gasfield free declarations and opposing the Shenhua Watermark coal mine. She has also supported Health Impact Assessments. On the question on of no-go areas she indicated that this depended on the will of the community. She has supported the Warkworth coal mine approval.

