



09 July 2012

**DETERMINATION OF THE CAMDEN GAS PROJECT STAGE 2:  
MT TAURUS – HARNESS RACING CLUB MODIFICATION APPLICATION  
(DA 183-8-2004-i MOD 2 – SUBMITTED 18 OCTOBER 2011)**

**1. DELEGATION TO THE COMMISSION**

The proposed modification (DA 183-8-2004-i MOD 2) has been referred to the Planning Assessment Commission (the Commission) for determination under Ministerial delegation dated 14 September 2011, as Campbelltown City Council objects to the proposed modification and due to a reportable political donation.

The Commission determining the modification consists of Gabrielle Kibble, AO (Chair) and Garry Payne, AM.

**2. BACKGROUND AND MODIFICATION APPLICATION**

The Camden Gas Project (CGP) is a major coal seam gas project located south of Campbelltown and Camden in the Southern Coalfield, comprising over 130 gas wells and associated infrastructure.

Approval for the CGP has been granted in stages with subsequent modifications. The project is now regulated through five development consents and two major project approvals.

The current proposed modification of the Stage 2 application (183-8-2004-i) was submitted on 18 October 2011. It is a Section 75W application which seeks to modify consent granted under Part 4 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the Act) by the then Minister Assisting the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning.

The proposed modifications are set out in the Department's report and relate to the construction, drilling and operation of an additional 'surface to in-seam well' (MP25) adjacent to gas well location MP16, and upgrading (twinning) of the gas gathering line between gas wells MP 16 and MP13/30.

**3. DEPARTMENT'S ASSESSMENT REPORT**

On 18 June 2012 the Commission received the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's (the Department's) Assessment Report, documents associated with the proposed modification and submissions.

The Department is not required to notify or exhibit applications under s75W of the Act. The Department made the application available on its website, and consulted with a number of government agencies and key stakeholders as set out in section 4 of its report.

Following consultation on draft conditions relevant government agencies have no residual concerns. However, Campbelltown City Council has maintained its objections throughout the assessment process, and the Commission met with the Council as discussed in section 4 below.

The Department's Assessment Report considered the proposal's history, statutory context, submissions received, and provided an assessment of the following key issues:

- groundwater;
- surface water;
- biodiversity; and
- other issues including noise, heritage and traffic/transport.

From its assessment, the Department concludes that given the low likelihood of impacts that it is satisfied that the proposed modification is in the public interest and should be approved. The Department has also recommended more stringent conditions as follows:

- borehole construction and maintenance measures to provide adequate protection of groundwater resources;
- protection of the Nepean River and the associated riparian corridor which contain an Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) being a Riverflat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains. This is recommended to be achieved by a requirement to use above-ground baffle tanks for drilling fluids and prohibiting use of BTEX chemicals; and
- prohibiting use of hydraulic fracturing ('fracking') to extract the coal seam gas.

#### **4. MEETING WITH CAMPBELLTOWN CITY COUNCIL**

The Commission met with Campbelltown City Council at the Council's offices on 6 July 2012, and the Council outlined its concerns as follows:

- the Council has requested a moratorium on further coal seam gas mining until conclusive evidence emerges that this practice does not have a negative impact on the environment including water resources (both groundwater and surface waters);
- the modification application seeks significant expansion of the originally approved development, and should be dealt with by way of a new development application with accompanying environmental assessment;
- any application should be publicly exhibited;
- there is insufficient knowledge of the local and regional groundwater environment and the relationship with surface waters. Without this knowledge, the true extent, scale and nature of potential impacts of activities on water resources is unknown;
- cumulative environmental impacts of multiple wells;
- potential for direct harm to the Nepean River from salinity, pollution and during a flood event;
- impacts on the River Flat Eucalypt Forest (EEC) have not been appropriately assessed; and
- the site forms part of the potential Menangle Park Urban Release Area which will incorporate substantial investment and new development (including some 3,600 housing lots), in a close relationship with the Camden Gas Project.

## 5. COMMISSION'S COMMENTS

The Commission supports the proposed modification, as it allows for coal seam gas extraction within the bounds of an approved coal seam gas extraction project, while the location of the works and recommended conditions minimises potential for additional detrimental impacts on the environment and existing land uses.

The current proposed modification is minor, and it is within the immediate context of the Mt Taurus-Harness Racing Club. However, the Commission notes that if the proposed Menangle Park Urban Release Area is realised, that residential development would in due course move closer to the CGP and require consideration in any future expansion proposals for the Project.

The Commission also notes that the CGP is regulated under a complex set of consents and approvals, and it supports AGL's commitment to discussions with the OEH and the Department about the consolidation of the planning approvals.

## 6. COMMISSION'S DETERMINATION

The Commission has considered the Department's Assessment Report and associated documents including submissions received, and it met with Campbelltown City Council.

The Commission has approved the project modification (DA 183-8-2004-i MOD 2) in accordance with the Department's recommendation.



Gabrielle Kibble, AO  
**PAC Member (Chair)**



Garry Payne, AM  
**PAC Member**