



THE NIMBIN GOOD TIMES

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The battle of Bentley – a call to arms

by Scott Sledge

Much time and energy has already gone into protecting our part of the world from greedy corporate fossil fools. Gas exploration company, Metgasco, has been trying desperately to fulfill its promises to the share market while Northern Rivers residents do their best to stop them. Two sites in the region were blockaded for more than 100 days in 2013 before Metgasco suspended operations, but recently announced it would start drilling again – in the very heart of the Rainbow Region, at Bentley – only 14km from Lismore.

In a 2012 referendum the Lismore community voted 87% against gasfields development, so the area around Bentley will become a conflict zone: a company with no social license but some strong political backing will try to force its will against thousands of residents who know that this is where the tide of global destruction must turn back. Metgasco says it is “just one well,” to explore for gas. Of course one well isn’t worth anything: to be commercial, gas extraction of this type must be massive and environmentally devastating. This is why the nearby residents, especially the farmers, are staunchly opposed to it – apart from those who signed agreements in the halcyon period of the gas propaganda bubble, before it burst.

The state government and the gas industry probably have little enthusiasm for a confrontation at Bentley, but for Metgasco it is do or die. The people who bought shares back around 2005, believing the company’s propaganda that they were opening up a reservoir of “natural gas”, are worried that the share price has dropped from around \$1.50 then



to about 15 cents today. If they find enough gas to convince industry players and investors that this region is a chook ready for plucking, then Metgasco will look good, and we can probably expect to spend the next decade fighting the establishment of a gas field and pipeline to connect to the export facilities now being built along the Queensland coast. Only people power will be able to stop this. The Great Barrier Reef is in decline and the government and bureaucrats have recently approved plans to dump waste dredge for new coal and gas ports in the World Heritage area.

Why do corporations and governments invest in practices that risk contaminating air, land and water, when even Saudi Arabia plans to go solar and to join Germany and much of the rest of the world in being 100% renewable in the next few years? The International Energy Agency has forecast that world demand for coal will peak before 2020. The clean energy market is growing exponentially, exceeding \$250 billion in 2011. But gas is *not* a clean energy option.



The Bentley Protectors are gearing up to deny Metgasco their chance to make a quick buck out of the lifeblood of the Northern Rivers region. Drilling will pollute our precious water, and more. A vigil has started to keep the public informed, and to slow down damage to the site by Metgasco. There are plans for a camp at the location along Bentley Road at Bungabee Road about 600m towards Casino from the Lismore shire boundary, which will include a kitchen, café, info centre, first aid tent, media van, etc.

Volunteers are needed for the vigil

and info tent at Bentley, please call Nan on 0428-886-335 if you can help. Money is needed for materials. Locals are being very generous with machines and labour, but we need to be ready, so dig deep and donate to the new dedicated account managed by Nimbin Environment Centre. Summerland Credit Union BSB 728-728 Nim #22299016. Experienced accountants have volunteered to be responsible for bookkeeping. (If your transfer doesn’t go through for “Nim” try spelling out “Nimbin Environment Centre”. You may

want to write your name on the reference line. If you want a receipt email: sunpower3026@hotmail.com)

Coming events

A number of events are planned to demonstrate community opposition to CSG mining. Phone Nimbin Environment Centre on 6689-1441 for further information; also updates are available on Facebook: *Rosella – Metgasco Gasfield at Bentley?*

- Monday 10/2** – Site tours 9am-1pm Bungabee Road;
- Friday 14/2** – ‘Have a Heart Metgasco’ demo outside Metgasco Casino and Sydney offices;
- Sunday 16/2** – Healing the Earth site blessing at Bungabee;
- Tuesday 25/2** – Wyoming rancher John Fenton speaks at Casino RSM 7pm. Bangalow A&I Hall on Monday 3/3, 6pm;
- Sunday 2/3** – Letterboxing leaflets. Volunteers meet at Spinks Park, Lismore, 9am;
- Tuesday 11/3** – Public meeting against gasfields at Lismore Workers Club at 7.30pm.



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