



Salt water irrigation trials - Gloucester.

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To: nswchiefscientist@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au

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Dear Professor O'Kane,

On 19th November, 2013, AGL Energy issued a media release <http://www.agl.com.au/about-agl/media-centre/article-list/2013/nov/agls-irrigation-trial-produces-top-crops-for-local-farmers-livestock-feed> in which it announced that it was irrigating a six hectare cropping area with a blend of fresh water and water produced from coal seam gas production on that property, and that it had been conducting this trial for the past 7 months over a six hectare area.

It is well documented by many scientists, and also by the NSW Government, that produced water from coal seam gas production contains salt, as well as Arsenic, Beryllium, Cadmium, Chromium, Copper, Fluoride, Formaldehyde, Lead, Mercury, Nickel, Radon and more.

It appears that AGL has formed the view that by diluting the contaminated water with fresh water, it is acceptable to irrigate pasture with the resultant salty shandy.

Nothing could be further from fact. The amount of salt being spread across this pasture is the same, whether the water in which the salt is contained is diluted with fresh water, or not.

Again it is will researched and documented that saline water used for irrigation results in soil salinisation rendering it unfit for raising most crops and plants. The plants will use the water and the salt is left behind. It can destroy soil structure and cause soil erosion, ultimately, when crops are too strongly affected by the amount of salts.

Conducting such an "irrigation trial" is poisoning this agricultural land with salt, and the damage to the soil may never be able to be reversed.

Irrigating with salty water, diluted or not, is a recipe for environmental disaster.

It is requested that you require AGL to stop this experiment before permanent, irreversible damage is done.

Clearly AGL has no proper plan for the disposal of contaminated water extracted from coal seams and merely intends to spread that water across pasture. The last time AGL spread salty water across pasture it was only for a couple of days, and about 500,000 litres. The NSW Ombudsman took the view that they had breached their licence conditions and a remediation order was made.

We look forward to your urgent and favourable response.

Graeme Gibson.
Secretary,
Hunter Valley Protection Alliance Inc.