



Planning for growing NSW

Exhibition of changes to gas exploration assessment

WHY IS THE NSW GOVERNMENT CHANGING THE PLANNING RULES FOR GAS EXPLORATION?

- The NSW Gas Plan will reset the approach to gas development in NSW, building on the Chief Scientist and Engineer's Independent review into coal seam gas (CSG) activities in NSW.
- The Chief Scientist and Engineer found that regulation of gas activities was too complex - at present, there are several agencies involved in regulating the exploration process via 14 different pieces of legislation – and this contributes to an excessive administrative burden and erodes community confidence.
- Under the Gas Plan, the NSW Government commits to a clearer division of responsibility for assessment and determination of gas activities so that it is clear who is accountable.
- The Government is asking for feedback on proposed changes to planning rules which would move the assessment of all gas exploration activity to the Office of Coal Seam Gas within the Division of Resources and Energy.
- The Office of Coal Seam Gas has expertise in gas exploration assessment and would continue to subject gas exploration proposals to a rigorous assessment under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.
- This means the Department of Planning and Environment would no longer assess gas exploration activities, but would continue to assess all gas production proposals.

WHAT PLANNING CHANGES ARE BEING MADE?

- The proposed changes to planning rules would move the assessment of gas exploration activity to the Office of Coal Seam Gas within the Division of Resources and Energy.
- This would involve making amendments to:
 - *State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011* so that CSG exploration activity is no longer considered State Significant Development and



Planning for growing NSW

Frequently Asked Questions

November 2014

- *State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007* so that CSG exploration activities are no longer assessed under Part 4 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

DO THE CHANGES MEAN THAT MORE GAS EXPLORATION CAN OCCUR?

- No, all gas exploration would still have to go through a rigorous assessment process by the Office of Coal Seam Gas.
- The proponent must prepare a Review of Environmental Factors to consider all matters affecting or likely to affect the environment before granting approval for exploration including: impacts on communities, cumulative and long term impacts, pollution, and risks to the environment.
- If the Office of Coal Seam Gas considers the proposed activity will have a significant impact on the environment (including critical habitat, threatened species, or ecological communities) then an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) must be prepared.
- The EIS will have to be publicly exhibited for community comment.

WILL GAS PRODUCTION PROPOSALS STILL BE ASSESSED SEPARATELY?

- Yes, gas operators will still have to separately seek approval from the Department of Planning and Environment for a State significant gas production proposal, including public exhibition of an Environmental Impact Statement for community comment.

WILL THE CHANGES ALLOW NEW CSG PROPOSALS IN CSG EXCLUSION ZONES OR IN THE CRITICAL INDUSTRY CLUSTERS IN THE UPPER HUNTER?

- No, the exclusion zones will continue to safeguard homes and equine and viticulture critical industry clusters in the Upper Hunter from the impacts of coal seam gas.

DO THE CHANGES AFFECT THE GATEWAY PROCESS FOR NEW GAS PROPOSALS?

- The Gateway process will continue to apply to new State significant gas production proposals on strategic agricultural land across NSW.

Planning for growing NSW

Frequently Asked Questions

November 2014

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION?

- The proposed planning changes can be viewed:
 - online at: www.planning.nsw.gov.au/proposals
 - at the Department's Information Centre at 23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney

HOW CAN I HAVE A SAY ABOUT THE CHANGES BEING PROPOSED?

- Submissions can be made up to: **2 December 2014.**
 - online at: www.planning.nsw.gov.au/proposals
 - by mail to: Manager, Resource Policy, Department of Planning and Environment, GPO Box 39 Sydney NSW 2001.
- Submissions will be made public in line with the Department of Planning and Environment's objective to promote an open and transparent planning system. If you do not want your name published, please state this clearly at the top of your submission.
- Before making a submission, please read our privacy policy at: www.planning.nsw.gov.au/privacy
- **Inquiries: 1300 305 695**