



# The Hon Anthony Roberts MP

## Minister for Resources and Energy Special Minister of State

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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Wednesday, 16 April 2014

#### **NSW GOVERNMENT CONDEMNS UNLAWFUL DAMAGE TO PRIVATE PROPERTY**

Minister for Resources and Energy Anthony Roberts and Member for Clarence Chris Gulaptis today met with the Councils of Richmond Valley, Lismore and Kyogle LGAs to discuss developments in the local community and gas industry in the Northern Rivers.

The Land and Water Commissioner Jock Laurie chaired the meeting, at which community leaders and representatives were briefed on the refusal of Petroleum Licence Applications 127 & 128, the science of gas extraction by a petroleum engineer, as well as the compliance and enforcement regime for the industry.

During the meeting the Minister condemned the unlawful behaviour of extremist protestors at the Bentley Farm, near Casino, in Northern NSW.

Protestors have set up a camp outside the farm of Peter Graham to protest against the installation of a conventional gas well.

Since the establishment of the camp protestors have continuously entered Mr Graham's property illegally and caused deliberate damage. This includes chaining, padlocking and welding gates, and laying barriers of concrete and metal spikes on driveways.

Mr Roberts said this behaviour was unacceptable and would not be tolerated.

"Peter Graham has made a free, informed and voluntary choice to allow gas operations on his land," he said.

"Farmers have a right to allow legal gas operations on their land free from bullying, harassment and intimidation.

"Peter and his family, including his two seven-year-old children, should not have to put up with this behaviour day-in and day-out.

"If people have an issue with gas operations in New South Wales they should take that up with the Government rather than intimidate landholders and companies.

"They will achieve nothing by intimidating landholders, and the full force of the law will be brought to bear on those involved in illegal activity."

Last month the NSW Government facilitated the signing of an *Agreed Principles of Land Access* agreement between major gas companies and landholders representatives. The principles condemn bullying, harassment and intimidation by any groups in relation to lawful and voluntary operations.

The Division of Energy and Resources will be allocating a full-time petroleum engineer to oversee the exploration well. In addition an inspector will be assigned to inspect well integrity and environmental factors. If residents wish to seek further information they can contact the Division's community liaison officer.

The well that is being drilled is not dissimilar to the nearly 5,000 wells, including some 440 irrigation bores and more than 4,300 stock and domestic bores, that currently exist in the Northern Rivers.

**\*Photos attached show damage to Bentley Farm – all are on private property**

