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CSG devil stalks Eden

by Scott Sledge, President Northern Rivers Guardians

Some say that the doubt has been removed from Doubtful Creek, and the sign at the entrance to the forest track says 'Eden Creek State Forest', so I'm calling it that. I rather like the idea we're saving Eden.

A lot has happened since January 10, when the Northern Rivers Guardians combined with Nimbin Environment Centre to establish a protectors' camp on private property near the Kyogle Shire site proposed for drilling by Metgasco.

The campaign shifted focus to the forest overlooking the area fenced for the drill pad and a vigil began there. Several times the protectors turned away Metgasco workers who came to prepare for a core well meant to test the area for its potential to supply coal seam gas (CSG).

The people at Glenugie, south of Grafton, put up an almighty struggle. A clever contraption called The Traumatron was used to delay the departure of the drill rig from Glenugie, but an enormous police contingent escorted the rig onto the Eden Creek site.

Complaints of police brutality at Glenugie seem to have resulted in a more restrained approach at Eden Creek, but a few people were roughly handled and the police showed where their priorities lay when an ambulance was delayed while the convoy of trucks was escorted through. An injured woman was made to wait



Neighbouring property owner Don Knight Photos: Marie Cameron

because Metgasco had enough political muscle (all that money spent lobbying state government wasn't wasted).

Various attempts to impede the progress of the rig were made, including traffic jams at a bridge and at Booths Road intersection. Local farmers and Gittabul community members started shouting "Shame" and "Leave this place".

Resistance was mostly symbolic because of the overwhelming force of police. Many questioned why our tax dollars were wasted forcing a destructive activity by a private company onto a peaceful population.

Meanwhile, thieves committed armed robberies in the area. Police refused to tell journalists how much money the task force had cost taxpayers.

Protectors remained on-site, every day obstructing the access to the drill site until enough police could be found to push them aside. As soon as the police went away, the blockade was renewed, with



vigils kept at Booths Road and Eden Creek Forest entry gates.

No business can thrive with such constant delays, and the drill program ended with less than inspiring results. Three wells were planned in four weeks; it ended with two wells in three months.

The stock market punished the upstart company by dropping its share price ever lower, and by the end of February, Metgasco's shares

were closing regularly at less than half their value when the drilling program started in November 2012.

The pressure of investors not happy with CSG was evident when ANU announced on 26th February that it had sold off its 2.5 million Metgasco shares, at a loss – but hey, what's a few dollars compared to preserving a world fit to live in?

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Scenes from the Blockade



Photo: Peter Barnyngoz



Photo: Peter Barnyngoz



Photo: Marie Cameron



Photo: Jo Evans



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