

## **MEDIA RELEASE 13TH AUGUST 2012**

### **SCOPING COMMITTEE FORMING FOR HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The North West Alliance met yesterday in Bellata with participants from across the New England and North West. A major topic for discussion was progress on the formation of a Regional Task Group to conduct a Health Impact Assessment in the Gunnedah Basin.

A resolution to conduct a Health Impact Assessment into the individual and cumulative effects of coal seam gas and the expansion of coal mining, was carried by community members at the Health Forum conducted by the Alliance in Gunnedah on August 4<sup>th</sup>. Forum attendees were adamant that no negative health impacts resulting from these industries would be tolerated, reflecting concerns reported from the CSG fields in Tara, Queensland, and the high incidence of respiratory disease and cancer clusters recently reported in the Hunter Valley and Newcastle.

Phil Laird, from Maules Creek Community Council gave a brief overview of the process of a Health Impact Assessment, which uses a combination of methods and tools by which a policy, programme or project may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population.

“Formation of a Scoping Committee to decide the Terms of Reference of the Health Impact Assessment is the first step in this process. Members of the Scoping Committee may well continue on as part of the project” said Mr Laird.

Nicky Chirlian, from Save Our Soils Liverpool Plains, reported that Expressions of Interest for members of the Scoping Committee have been sent out widely, including to all local councils, community organisations and Hunter New England Health.

“A range of qualifications for members of the group are required, including health, government, finance, and media skills. We are also seeking representatives from communities across the region and across cultural, employment, and business sectors.” she said.

“A number of applications from community members with qualifications in law, health, business, and project management have been received to date, and that more enquiries are welcome.”

An initial meeting to develop the Terms of Reference by the Scoping Committee is planned for mid September.

For further information contact North West Alliance members Phil Laird (0428712622) or Nicky Chirlian (0488056199).

**NORTH WEST ALLIANCE  
EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST – SCOPING COMMITTEE,  
HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT – GUNNEDAH BASIN**

Following the successful Health Forum "Undermining Our Health" held in Gunnedah on 4th August, the community resolved to conduct a regional Health Impact Assessment on the Gunnedah Basin, with the Centre for Primary Health Care and Equity, University of New South Wales. To that end, we are calling for Expressions of Interest to join a scoping committee to commence this work. A single meeting to develop the Terms of Reference for the HIA will be held in Gunnedah in mid September 2012 (indicative duration 2-4 hours).

To be effective, desirable skills of the whole committee should include:

- Project Management
- Finance and Budgeting
- Health Background
- Experience with Health Impact Assessment
- Political/Government/Corporate Background
- Media Skills
- Familiarity with the proposed developments in the region

We are looking across the region for persons with knowledge, qualifications or interest in the following areas:

**Management:** Chair - oversight of process, & media liaison; Deputy chair - project management

**4 Community Representatives:** Caroon/Mullaley/Quirindi; Maules Creek/Narrabri/Bellata/Gurley/Wee Waa. Representative of Aboriginal groups, mine workers, townspeople and agricultural sectors.

**4 organizations or professionals:** Representatives from Mining related Councils ; Hunter New England Health; General Practitioner, Nursing, Mental Health Professional Chartered Accountant, Lawyer or Corporate Manager

For more information regarding Health Impact Assessments see The World Health Organisation website: <http://www.who.int/hia/en/>

Please contact Phil Laird [wplaird@bigpond.com](mailto:wplaird@bigpond.com) or Nicky Chirlian [nicky@tallawang.com](mailto:nicky@tallawang.com) if you are interested in becoming involved in this process or wish to apply. Applications will close on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2012.