

# Linc Energy underground fires 'extinguished' says Minister

Matthew Newton | 21st Feb 2017 11:01 AM



The Linc Energy Hopeland site from the air.

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STATE Environment Minister Dr Steven Miles has confirmed the gasifiers at the Linc Energy trial Underground Coal Gasification site have extinguished themselves.

Early into the investigation into Linc Energy's activities, Minister Miles said there was a concern the gasifiers were continuing to burn despite the plant being shut down.

That concern was echoed by some in the Hopeland community, who were worried the UCG process would continue to release contaminants long after operations ceased.

"But that's now been confirmed... Our understanding is they've extinguished themselves and there is no fire burning underground," Minister Miles said.

The government is alleging Linc Energy wilfully caused serious environmental harm at its Hopeland site between 2007 and 2013.

Linc Energy operated numerous gasifiers over the course of its project, where oxygen is pumped through a well into a cavity within a coal seam and then ignited, producing syngas.

Minister Miles said the government was now focused on gathering information that might inform what kind of remediation work they could perform on the gasifiers.

He also said it was hoped the most recent testing, which led to the establishment of a new 47,000 hectare "Investigation Area", would have been "more definitive in terms of boundary or extent of the hydrogen".

"But there's more work to be done - it's not clear yet," Minister Miles added.

When asked whether he had considered the evidence the department had so far gathered about Linc's activities could some day be used against the government in a class action by landholders if the charges were substantiated, Minister Miles said the government's current focus was on the investigation and the prosecution of Linc Energy.

"Obviously some of the residents, lanholders, have sought legal advice and they'll make decisions about where they go from there," he said.

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