

# Centre to 'debunk myths' on natural gas

July 24, 2014, midnight

A NEW industry-funded advocacy and education group says it will be a fact-based, evidence led, source of information about natural gas exploration and development in Australia.

Members of the Energy Resource Information Centre (ERIC) visited Gloucester earlier this month.

The centre is backed by prominent extractive resource companies including AGL and Santos.



Energy in Depth director Shawn Bennett and Energy Resource Information Centre director Paul Downie visited Gloucester last week.

Director Paul Downie said the centre would focus on providing advocacy, education, information and outreach services, but would not act as a mouthpiece for specific mining companies.

The centre is based on a similar model to the Energy in Depth campaign in the US, the Shale Resource Centre in Canada and Shale Gas Europe.

Energy in Depth director Shawn Bennett accompanied Mr Downie and ERIC's strategic communications director Ben Hamilton on their visit to Gloucester.

“Energy in Depth started in 2009 following an increase in the amount of shale gas extraction in the US,” Mr Bennett said.

“There were people that were sceptical of the industry so we stepped in and started doing research.

“We wanted to dispel the ‘not in my backyard’ rumours.

“Once people see and understand the lingo they quickly see there’s nothing scary about it.”



The Energy Resource Information Centre says it will be a fact-based, evidence led, source of information about natural gas exploration and development in Australia.

Mr Downie said ERIC had been endorsed by oil and gas industry lobby group APPEA at its annual conference earlier in the year, but would not endorse individual mining projects or companies.

“We’re not working for AGL or supporting the Gloucester Gas Project,” he said.

“But if we don’t start providing this information now and responding to some of the myths being circulated the road will become a lot harder down the track.”

The centre launched its website last week at [www.naturalgasfacts.org.au](http://www.naturalgasfacts.org.au)

It contains an overview on natural gas and information on its uses as well as conversations on anti-industry films, methane leakage and water use and management.

The centre will also publish a regular newsletter, engage with media organisations and start and contribute to conversations through social media platforms.

AGL says it has sponsored the centre ‘to help address the need for quality information’.

“The centre is fully funded by the natural gas industry, including AGL and we make no secret of that fact,” a spokeswoman said.

“We think it’s important that there is another voice to provide factual information and address the misconceptions about natural gas through a variety of channels including the website, a regular newsletter, and direct engagement with the community and media.

“It draws on the deep expertise of the US-based Energy in Depth but will have a distinctly Australian voice, with the team working on the project living and working in NSW and Western Australia.”