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More hot air from Lock the Gate Alliance

The Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association, the peak body representing Australia's oil and gas industry, said claims that a hydrogen sulphide smell in the Tara residential estate is a result of gas industry operations are unfounded.

APPEA Chief Operating Officer Eastern Region, Rick Wilkinson, said: "Natural gas from coal seams is typically methane, with small percentages of nitrogen, ethane and carbon dioxide.

"Coal seam gas does not contain hydrogen sulphide.

"These claims are typical of the wild, shrill and broadly denigrating statements by opponents of the gas industry and should be treated as such."

The Western Downs is an agricultural centre, with many farms, feedlots and associated activities that can involve strong-smelling fertilisers and other chemicals. These smells can be carried on the wind for long distances.

Hydrogen sulphide is a natural by-product of the decay of vegetation and can be present in the natural environment after wet periods. It is also commonly generated in rotting eggs and sewage farms.

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The Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association represents the upstream oil and gas industry in Australia. APPEA member companies produce around 98 per cent of Australia's oil and gas.