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Time for Lock the Gate and Greens to condemn violent behaviour

Revelations that a NSW-based gas company has received a bomb threat is a stark reminder that extremists continue to place local Northern Rivers jobs under threat through unlawful activity, threats of violence and disruptive behaviour, the Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association (APPEA) said today.

APPEA Chief Operating Officer Eastern Region Rick Wilkinson today called for calm from protestors who were doing little to enhance public debate around natural gas production and use.

Mr Wilkinson said: "People have a right to express an opinion or protest peacefully but what we're witnessing in the Northern Rivers region from some activists is truly disturbing.

"It is even more disturbing is that such activity has not been condemned by the head of the Lock the Gate Alliance Drew Hutton and Greens Senator Larissa Waters.

"All companies seeking to explore for resources and produce natural gas in NSW go through stringent environmental assessment and approval processes so they can lawfully go about their business.

"Unfortunately in the lead-up to Christmas while local contractors and company workers are willing to work and provide for their families we're witnessing some appalling behaviour.

"The implications for industry, the state's natural gas supply, local workers and businesses cannot be overstated."

Aside from yesterday's bomb threat there have been incidents of spitting and jostling at a public forum hosted by a state minister, an alleged threat against a gas worker's life and people pretending to faint in front of moving vehicles.

Mr Wilkinson said many residents in the Northern Rivers region have legitimate questions and interest in gas exploration and production.

He said: "Unfortunately they are being drowned out by people who are more interested in questionable protest activity than hearing facts and reasonable debate.

"At a time of continuing economic uncertainty and tightening of federal and state budgets many people are interested to find out about job opportunities and investment in local communities.

"In the Northern Rivers region, unemployment is 7.9 per cent, which is much higher than the NSW State average of 5.1 per cent.

"Some people in the area care about regional development and jobs for their families."

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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.