

**Online questionnaire report:  
Inquiry into the Coal and Gas Legislation Amendment (Liverpool Plains Prohibition)  
Bill 2021**

**Introduction**

As part of its inquiry into the Coal and Gas Legislation Amendment (Liverpool Plains Prohibition) Bill 2021 (the Bill), Portfolio Committee No. 4 - Industry launched an online questionnaire to enable public participation in an efficient and accessible way.

The questionnaire was not intended as a statistically valid survey. Like the submission process, respondents self-selected in choosing to participate. This means that respondents were not a representative sample of the New South Wales population, but rather interested members of the public who volunteered their time to have a say.

The questionnaire was complementary to and did not replace the usual submission process. The submission portal was also available to individuals and organisations who wished to provide a more detailed response to the inquiry's terms of reference. In this regard, some respondents may have completed the questionnaire and also made a submission.

The questionnaire asked respondents for their position on the Coal and Gas Legislation Amendment (Liverpool Plains Prohibition) Bill 2021 and their views on the issue.

The full list of questions is at **Appendix 1**.

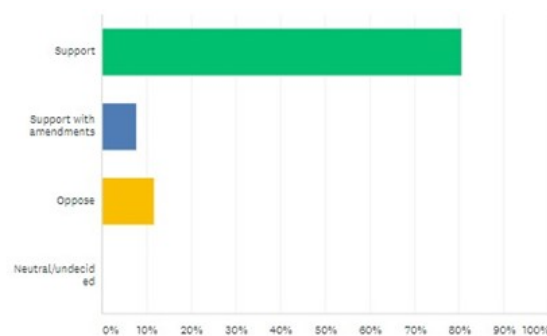
## Responses to questions

The questionnaire was open from 18 May 2021 to 15 June 2021 and received 81 responses. A sample of answers and summaries of responses are provided for each question below. The samples have been selected to represent the various viewpoints expressed in the responses.

***What is your position on the Coal and Gas Legislation Amendment (Liverpool Plains Prohibition) Bill 2021? Select one of these options:***

- a) Support***
- b) Support with amendments***
- c) Oppose***
- d) Neutral/undecided***

Most respondents supported the Bill, with 80.5 per cent supporting the Bill as is and a further 7.8 per cent indicating their support subject to amendments. 11.7 per cent of respondents opposed the Bill, however, responses to subsequent qualitative questions suggested that two thirds of these respondents intended to express their opposition to mining and not the Bill.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Support	80.52% 62
Support with amendments	7.79% 6
Oppose	11.69% 9
Neutral/undecided	0.00% 0
TOTAL	77

***In relation to the previous question, please explain your position on the bill (max. 500 words)***

Several key themes emerged in the explanations provided by the supporters of the Bill, including: the Liverpool Plains' rich agricultural value; the potential impact of mining on the Liverpool Plains' environment and communities; opposition to coal and gas mining in the context of climate change and the government's commitment to achieve net zero emissions; and the need to protect Indigenous heritage.

Over one third of the Bill's supporters referenced the Liverpool Plains' rich agricultural value, and the possible negative impact on agriculture from mining activity in the region.

- 'The Liverpool Plains is our food bowl and needs to be protected from the fossil fuel industry. Farming is long term, mining is destructive, and has a short life span, it uses and pollutes enormous amounts of our precious water'.
- 'Mining of any type including gas should not be permissible on prime agricultural land or where there is underground aquifer water or close proximity to above ground water

sources. The government must realise the end of fossil fuel sources is nigh - so make good policy for the future with renewables ...'

- '... It is well known and well researched that the soils of the Liverpool Plains which sit above substantial and important aquifers are among the best and most productive in the world. Our farmers in Australia and on the Liverpool Plains are highly skilled practitioners and need the certainty required to produce the food and fibre we need....the gold of human survival into the future. Mining on highly productive agricultural soils is for short term gain only and is extremely risky in its high potential to interfere in a substantial way with ancient aquifers about which we know very little ...'.
- 'The Liverpool Plains is amongst the richest and most fertile land in the world. Our water resources are superb and the area is well known for its diversity of crop growing and livestock production. Gas is fast becoming yesterday's industry. We need this area for food product. The gas industry have not been able to accurately assess the emissions from gas wells. I don't know why we are still debating this backward, destructive industry'.
- 'We have limited areas of good quality agricultural land in Australia and the Liverpool Plains is one such area that should be reserved for food production'.
- 'The Liverpool Plains is one of the most productive agricultural areas in Australia. It should not be used for the short term financial gain of miners, particularly when the costs to the environment far outweigh the financial gains of a few ...'

A number of respondents especially noted that mining in the Liverpool Plains risked contaminating the Great Artesian Basin.

- 'These petroleum leases would undermine the Liverpool Plains and risk contaminating the water of the Great Artesian Basin which lies below the plains. This area is a food bowl for Australia. It makes no sense'.
- '... Gas fracking is a toxic mining technique that is a very high risk of contaminating the Artesian Basin. If we contaminate the ground water then farming will not be possible in all the Artesian Basin. This could lead to very expensive food and many poor people starving. Please think of the future generations and not short term profit'.

Many respondents also referenced climate change as a reason for supporting the Bill, stating that mining must be ceased in order to protect the environment.

- 'We urgently need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions because of the deleterious effects they are having on the world's climate. Because of this we must cease all mining and extraction of fossil fuels. The Liverpool Plains contain prime agricultural land and it is particularly important that this valuable land is not damaged and polluted by activities linked to fossil fuel extraction. The coal and gas industries must be phased out now and our important agricultural industries supported and encouraged. No mining on the Liverpool Plains'.
- 'In these times when the climate crisis looms large, the world is rapidly transitioning to a net zero emissions economy before 2050 and the days of coal and gas are numbered, the default position should be to not approve any new coal and gas projects. The Bill puts into

effect this default position and works to achieve the latter goals. Moreover the Bill serves as a rallying call to unite the interests of wide range of interests in the community including environmentalists, farmers, First Nations people and business groups that have already decided that the future lies in the low carbon economy ...'.

- 'Every reputable scientist and energy or climate commission or body has stated that the evidence is irrefutable: there must be an IMMEDIATE stop to coal and gas developments'.
- 'Coal and gas are fossil fuels that contribute to climate change as well as causing immediate damage to the local environment, including precious water resources. We need in to invest in renewable energy as a nation'.

Some respondents referenced net zero targets set by New South Wales as reasons for supporting the Bill, stating that any new mining projects would make such targets unachievable and calling for a transition to renewal energy in the state.

- 'I support this bill and would like to see the prohibition extended to all of NSW in line with the net zero emissions target for NSW, in line with international commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement and in line with the International Energy Agency's advice that we cannot afford any new coal, oil or gas projects if we are to achieve global net zero and limit warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels'.
- 'The further development of coal and gas in NSW is incompatible with a safe approach to reducing our carbon emissions. The International Energy Agency's statement on critical milestones for achieving a "net zero by 2050" goal states that no investment in new fossil fuel supply projects is justified if we are to have a chance of reaching that goal ...'.
- 'I support this bill as we do not need any new fossil fuel burning plants. Our NSW net zero target for 2030 is a 35% reduction but this cannot be reached with new plants proposed in the Liverpool Plains ...'.

Respondents also referred to the impacts of mining on farming communities as reasons for supporting the bill.

- '... Mining leases need to be terminated to give farmers and farming families certainty into the future. After the debacle of Shenhua and its damage to farming families who were forced or felt they were forced to sell, the loss of farming expertise and the damaging social fallout, this law needs to be passed...'.
- '... This is valuable farmland that we cannot afford to see destroyed. The farming communities deserve security without the threat of fossil fuel development undermining (literally) their future'.

First Nations respondents referenced destruction of Gomeroi waterways and sacred sites, alongside the stress such destruction causes traditional owners.

- 'As a Gamilaroi Father I strongly oppose the ongoing destruction of our water ways and scared sites due to greed and lack of vision for the cultural and food safety for other future generations'.

- 'As a Gomeri custodian I cannot nor will not grant my authority for coal and gas companies and irrigators to be permitted to desecrate any more Gomeri land. These industries do pollute our only source of water and therefore should never be permitted. They also are causing immense stress for not just Gomeri peoples but literally the entire northwest NSW population!'

For some respondents, it was a combination of the reasons discussed above that led them to support the Bill.

- '...The Liverpool Plains is one of the safest and prolific food production areas in Australia, being able to access magnificent underground water supplies and be in year round production of food and fibre. Communities on the Plains have fought for well over 10 years to try and make Government understand what is at risk - if we lose or damage the water by impacts from gas or coal mining, not only do we lose our livelihoods, but our regional, state and national economies will be negatively impacted. We can see, just over the Liverpool Range, what a total disaster for agriculture the mining industry has brought to the Hunter Valley, and we see the devastation to farmland by Whitehaven in the Leard Forest and we do not want this replicated on the Liverpool Plains. We are working hard to protect our country from the impacts of climate change - why would we want these industries on the Plains that will further exacerbate it?'
- 'The Liverpool Plains is an area which must be protected for agriculture and specifically food production. It is recognised as one of the two best agricultural regions in the entire world. The natural rainfall allows for two harvests per year, and the alluvial black soil is deep and rich... Other values in the area which need to be protected from fossil fuel mining are the cultural heritage of the Gomeri people inherent in the landscape and undisturbed sacred sites, and habitat for native species such as the koala!'

A minority of respondents opposed the Bill. These respondents emphasised the mining industry's economic contribution to the Liverpool Plains, and raised concerns regarding the future of the region should the mining industry be forced to withdraw.

- '...Mines provide many employment opportunities for young people trying to improve their future and grow the surrounding communities!'
- 'I feel there needs to be mining in our region to support local businesses and families!'
- 'There are no reasonable grounds for implementing this legislation amendment. No consideration has been given to key issues impacting on regional Australia including: employment loss or reduced opportunities; impacts on future investment in the region; impacts on tenure security and the rights of companies investing in the region; impacts on reduced revenue to the state through royalties impacting investment in health, education etc.; impacts on local businesses throughout NW NSW; impacts on regional towns impacted by reduced populations; impacts on regional communities through reduced investment. Without regional investment our towns will be negatively impacted and regional populations will decline. No consideration has been made on the impacts of such an amendment when introducing this bill and the committee should be embarrassed for wasting taxpayer money!'

***Do you have any other comments on the bill? (250 words)***

Respondents generally used this section as an opportunity to reiterate their position on the Bill. Comments typically stated that the Bill should be passed, that the Liverpool Plains should be protected from mining, as well as general comments concerning climate change.

- 'It's time for the destruction and loss of valuable agricultural land and natural habitats in the Liverpool Plains to end - just as it's time for the corruption and greed to end'.
- 'Keep the area that grows food free from fracking'.
- 'This needs to be passed to ensure our future'.
- 'The Liverpool Plains area will be compromised in terms of biodiversity and its agricultural activity'.
- 'This Bill is only one step in the transition to the low carbon economy. What Australia needs most of all is an economy-wide carbon price such as operated during the Gillard government. Such a price is the political elephant in the room but the best way to 'eat an elephant is one piece at a time'. This Bill is an important piece of that challenge'.

Some respondents stated that the provisions of the bill should extend beyond the Liverpool Plains to more or all of New South Wales.

- 'I would stress again that I support the bill and urge you to extend the prohibition across NSW if we are going to ensure a safe and liveable world for our children. We have no more time to waste on this issue'.
- 'Please include the Pilliga area in this legislation, too'.
- 'The prohibition should be extended to all of NSW in line with the Net Zero emissions target for NSW...'

Some respondents called for greater consultation with farmers and the wider community in considering mining and petroleum proposals.

- 'I have spoken with many farmers who had no idea their land was subject to these extinguished leases. This is causing them immense stress and I believe it is the government's role to alleviate this by giving them hope and a glimpse of a bright green future'.
- 'Any mining or gas exploration must never proceed without the permission of all landholders and the social license from the community!!!'

One respondent stated that mining grants should be assessed with expert advice, using the Shenhua mine as an example.

- '...In addition I would like to add that if this bill does not pass that amendments be included that state that the most recent scientific research available must be used in

assessing any applications of mining grants. In the case of Shenhua very little was known about the true impact this mine would have on underground water systems. When detailed research was done by the University of New South Wales it was apparently not considered. This situation is not good enough. Knowledge is not finite and when making major land use decisions all available and up to date research must be available for the minister in decision making processes'.

## Appendix 1: List of questions

### Page 1

1. Contact details (*free text*)

Name:

Email address:

Postcode:

2. Are you a resident of NSW? Select one of these options
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

### Page 2

3. What is your position on the Coal and Gas Legislation Amendment (Liverpool Plains Prohibition) Bill 2021? In answering this question, please note that the objects of this Bill are— (a) to prohibit the grant of new authorisations to mine or prospect for material under the *Mining Act 1992* on land in the Liverpool Plains, and (b) to prohibit the grant of new petroleum titles under the Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991 for petroleum mining operations on land in the Liverpool Plains, and (c) to ensure pending applications for authorisations or petroleum titles for land in the Liverpool Plains are taken to be refused, including applications for the renewal of expired petroleum titles, and (d) to cancel approved authorisations or petroleum titles for land in the Liverpool Plains if prospecting or mining operations have not commenced, and (e) to provide that compensation is not payable by or on behalf of the State because of the operation of this proposed Act. Select one of these options:
  - a. Support
  - b. Support with amendments
  - c. Oppose
  - d. Neutral/undecided

### Page 3

4. In relation to the previous question, please explain your position on the bill (max. 500 words) (*free text*)

### Page 4

5. Do you have any other comments on the bill? (250 words) (*free text*)