

**Submission  
No 500**

## **INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS**

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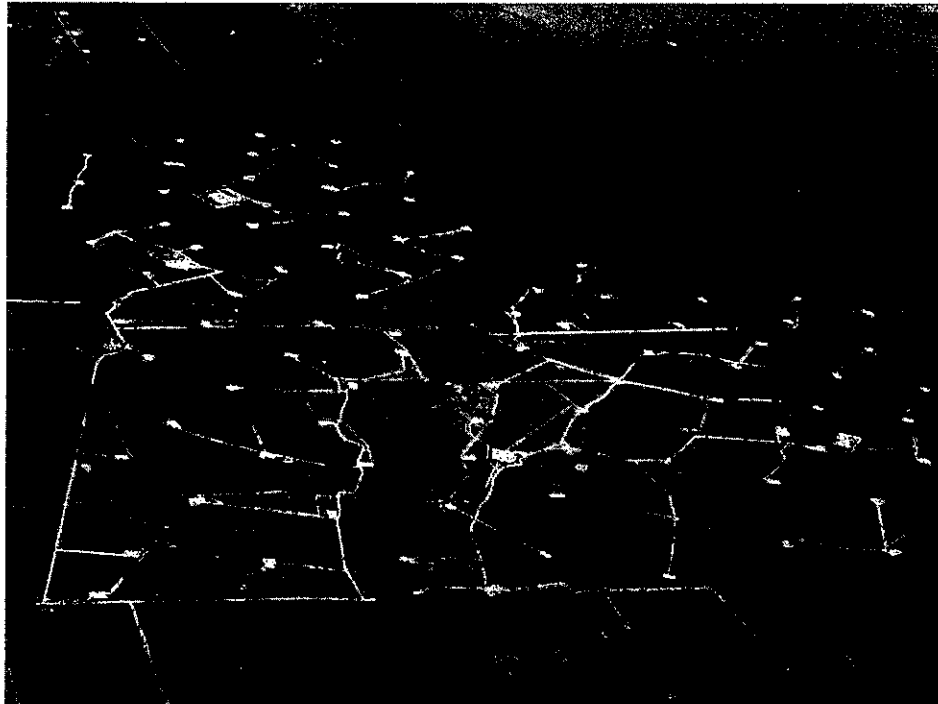
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We are strenuously opposed to Coal Seam Gas (CSG) mining. As farmers we take the stewardship of our land for the next generation extremely seriously. The farming industry is regulated and controlled by three levels of Government. How can an industry as potentially devastating as mining be completely self-regulating. The proof of how dangerous this industry can be is evidenced in both America and Queensland. These gas companies say 'it is different here' but cannot prove why these same problems cannot occur here.

The following points we consider imperative to consider when talking about CSG.

1. Environment:

- 1.1. Native Vegetation Act: We can't knock any trees down (not that we want to) or disturb other vegetation to eradicate a listed weed such as mimosa but mining companies can make our landscape look like this (Chinchilla Qld - below) or create an open-cut mine.



- 1.2. We are currently spending a large amount of money on Capping and Piping our Boredrains. This is to preserve the water and pressure in the Great Artesian Basin (GAB), stop salinity problems associated with open bore drains & lessen the amount of salt brought to the surface from the GAB and to provide cleaner water for our stock. It is not to allow mining companies to use as much water as they want for free. It is not to allow them to bring salt to the surface and then put it into evaporation ponds which can never be rehabilitated. They say they have 'make good' clauses to 'fix' any damage they inadvertently cause. There is no amount of money that can 'fix' the GAB once it is poisoned or drained by overuse or inter aquifer leakage. Please look at a map of the GAB (appendix 1) and see how much of our prime agricultural land and how many towns and cities will be dead and useless if the same damage occurs here as in The United States. They said it wouldn't happen there either!!
- 1.3. The Pilliga Forest: A former NSW Government locked up the Pilliga and got rid of the timber industries in Baradine and Gwabegar as they caused too much damage. Now the NSW government are allowing mining companies to sink unlimited bores, create unlimited roads, knock down unlimited trees and poison large areas of land. How is this environmental vandalism allowed? What catastrophe will happen when the next big fire goes through the Pilliga? These gas wells often have varying degrees of 'leakage' as proven in Queensland and America. Imagine over 500,000 hectares of forest on fire with up to 7,100 coal seam gas wells (appendix 2) exploding.
- 1.4. Who will compensate us when our cattle become sick and are unable to be sold because they have been drinking poisonous water as has happened in Queensland? Or when our new bore, which cost a lot of

money, runs out of water as the water table has dropped as it has in Queensland. How can they 'make good' this type of damage?

## 2. Economic and Social implications.

- 2.1. Food security: The way we are heading there will be no food security for our future. Most of the food grown in Australia will belong to other countries such as China or America. If we have the same bad consequences from CSG mining as they have had in Queensland and America our pristine farming land will be ruined as will our main water source the Great Artesian Basin.
- 2.2. Royalties payable to the state are a joke, if they are going to destroy our land and water they should at least have to pay for it. Don't the Australian people own what is beneath our soil? If I want to use fertilizer or chemical I have to buy it. Why do these companies not have to pay the Australian public for what is ours? Forget royalties, license fees etc, why do they not have to pay US, the people, per tonne of coal etc. they mine? If they actually had to pay for it, mining may not be so attractive and they will not decimate our water system, landscape & soils to supply overseas countries with our resources. Any government that thinks they are making a lot from mining are kidding themselves. The mining companies are making the money.
- 2.3. Foreign ownership: Please don't tell the Kiwis they are smarter than us when it comes to foreign ownership.
  - 2.3.1. Land values: This not only affects our future food security but increases land values so locals can't afford to buy land. When an American superannuation fund buys tens of thousands of acres in an area such as Wee Waa, property values are inflated and local farmers cannot compete.
  - 2.3.2. Nil benefits: Where are the benefits of a company such as Shenua buying up vast tracks of land? They pay a tiny amount for licence and royalties. They do not pay for the actual coal they are taking for themselves that they are stockpiling for later. They fly their workforce in and out from China. Once they have walked away and left an environmental mess who will rehabilitate the land? Will CSG companies be the next ones buying up land?
- 2.4. Communities:
  - 2.4.1. Local people become homeless as they can't afford to pay the exorbitant rents the mining companies pay. (evidenced in Dalby Qld)
  - 2.4.2. Locals are seduced by the big wages and then can't return to their old jobs when they want to. No other industry can pay the huge wages mining companies do. They become used to the more affluent lifestyle even when this is detrimental to the time spent with their families.
- 2.5. Maintenance: Defunct well-sites are supposed to be rehabilitated but I have seen them abandoned in the Pilliga. The government does not have enough money to cap and pipe free flowing bores at present. When the CSG industry has moved on in 30/40 years what government will be able to monitor and repair the tens of thousands of wellsites. Just finding them will be a major concern, there are no laws at present that makes the companies register well sites. How many exploration sites are listed on a concise database that allows the government to monitor them. The concrete deteriorates over time and this then allows inter-aquifer leakage. The speed at which it deteriorates varies between areas and soil and water types.
- 2.6. What government has budgeted for the increased physical and mental health resources required to take care of the people that fall sick due to CSG mining. The proof of this is evident in Queensland where people have to move from their homes because the gas wells make them sick. This can be due to, but not limited to, the chemicals, air quality, water, noise and stress of not being in control of their own property and livelihood.
- 2.7. Strategic Land Use Policy: This works straight into the hands of the CSG companies. Who determines which land is more important? Is it a physical measurement such as soil type and rainfall or an economic measurement such as value of production or how much tax you pay? This just serves to divide and conquer the community. People on the Liverpool Plains say their country is more productive than ours so leave us alone & go and destroy somewhere else. We say ours is more important than someone on the fringe of the Pilliga State Forest. On either of these criteria the Pilliga country would not even come close. The problem






here is the Pilliga country is more important as it is a major recharge area for the Great Artesian Basin. The only winners when communities start arguing over the entrance of the CSG industry into 'any area other than ours' will be the gas companies.

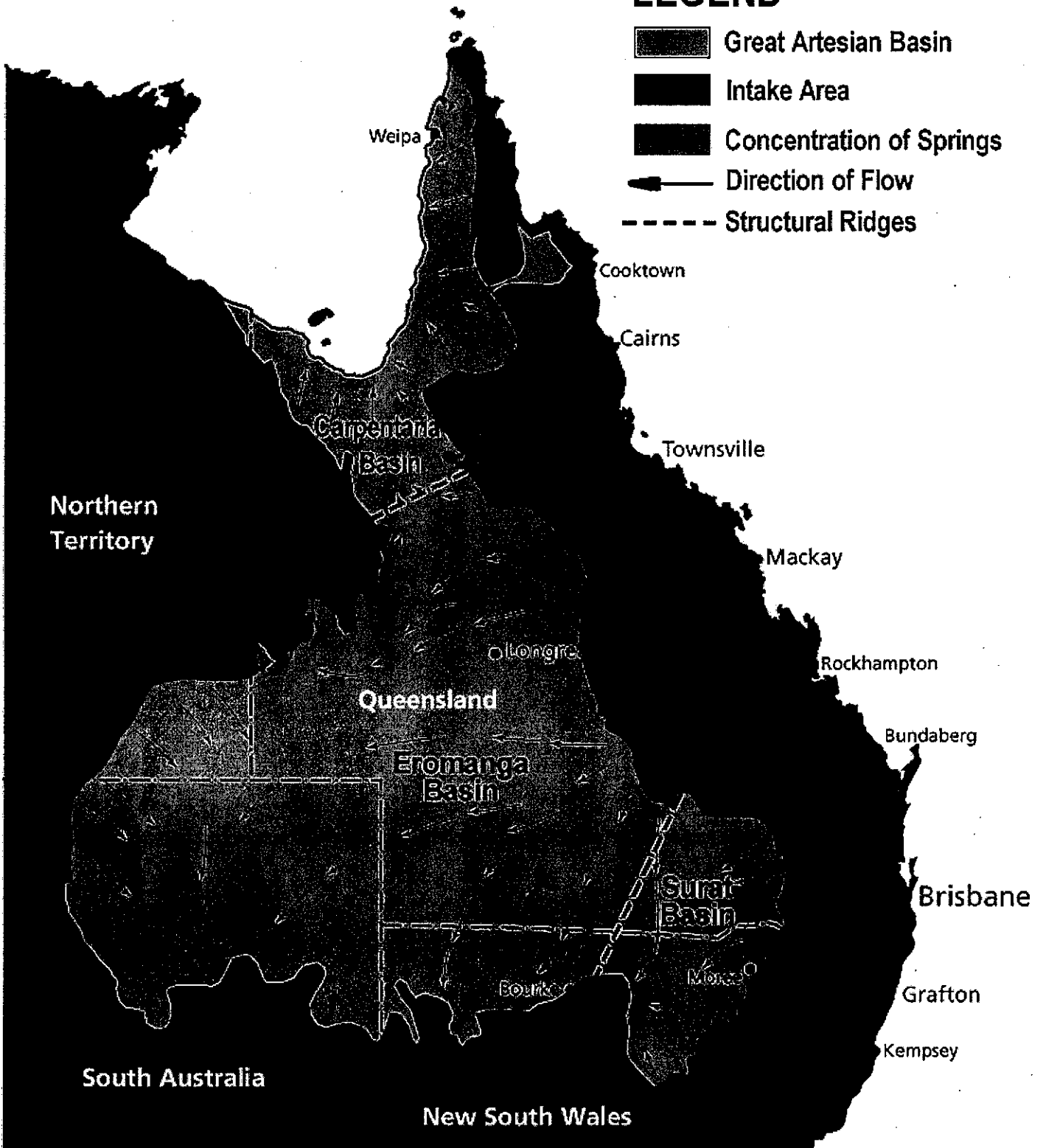
We only have 1 chance with our environment. We can't take chances on unproven science. We need to stop all CSG mining and the companies have to prove the science that this is 100% safe. It should not be up to us to prove it is not safe.

Yours sincerely,

Sonya Marshall

### LEGEND

-  Great Artesian Basin
-  Intake Area
-  Concentration of Springs
-  Direction of Flow
-  Structural Ridges



## **NORTHERN INLAND COUNCIL for the ENVIRONMENT**

**MEDIA RELEASE 1st June 2011**

### **EASTERN STAR GAS MUST COME CLEAN ON FULL PLANS FOR THE PILLIGA**

Environment groups have called on Eastern Star Gas to reveal their full plans for coal seam gas extraction in the Pilliga Scrub. Conservationists estimate that the full project after expansions and modifications may drill 7,100 coal seam gas wells in the Narrabri area and clear at least 8,000ha of native vegetation.

Eastern Star Gas have put in a project application to the Federal Government for 1,100 coal seam gas wells in the Pilliga Scrub within an 85,000ha 'project area'. However, their petroleum exploration titles<sup>1</sup> for the project cover a total area almost 10 times that size, or 821,875 hectares. In a bid to discover what the full proposal for the entire area is likely to look like, environment groups have used coal seam gas potential maps derived by the Department of Mineral Resources in 2002 to extrapolate the density of wells and clearing in the 'project area' out across the entire licence area. The results of that analysis are set out in Attachment 1.

"Our analysis raises the horrific spectre of 7,100 drill holes spreading like a disease across the vast

Pilliga Scrub and farmlands to the north" said Carmel Flint, spokesperson for the Northern Inland Council for the Environment.

"We know from experiences with coal seam gas in Queensland that companies start with a toehold in one area and then expand out to stamp a massive footprint on the landscape.

"It is a huge flaw in our planning system that companies are not required to put their full proposal on the table. Instead, governments just consider one small piece at a time, and the cumulative impacts of the full project are never actually assessed. It's a piecemeal planning process that allows companies to use endless mine expansions and modifications to rot the system" she said.

"We believe the NSW community has a right to know exactly what Eastern Star Gas is planning for the irreplaceable Pilliga Scrub. If they are going to clear 8,000 hectares of native vegetation, as our

analysis indicates, then the community should be told now" said Warrick Jordan, Campaigns Manager with The Wilderness Society Newcastle.

"The community needs to know how much habitat of the Black-striped Wallaby, Pilliga Mouse and Glossy Black Cockatoo Eastern Star plan to destroy over the life of this project. Local farmers deserve to know if they face the loss of productive farmland, the loss of control over their property, and contamination and disruption to water supplies.

"Given the grave risks that coal seam gas extraction poses to our public forests and our farmlands, we have a right to know exactly what is being planned.

"We are calling on both State and Federal governments to urgently take action on this issue – Eastern Star Gas must be required to put forward a complete project plan for the full Narrabri coal seam gas proposal" he said.

Information or comment: Carmel Flint 0400 521 474, Warrick Jordan 0451 633 197

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<sup>1</sup> PEL238, PAL2 and PPL3

## ATTACHMENT 1: ANALYSIS OF THE NARRABRI COAL SEAM GAS PROJECT

In 2002, the Department of Mineral Resources developed a map of coal seam gas potential across the Brigalow Belt South bioregion<sup>2</sup>, which covers the Eastern Star Gas Narrabri exploration area. This information allows an analysis to be conducted of the likely extent of the full Eastern Star Gas Narrabri coal seam gas project, based on the size and intensity of the current proposal for the small portion of the petroleum licence that is covered by their current 'project area' for which a development application has been lodged.

Map 1 shows the mineral potential across the region, and within both the Eastern Star Gas Narrabri exploration licence and the current Eastern Star Gas Narrabri 'project area'.

Analysing that map in a Geographic Information System, environment groups have derived the following statistics:

	Total Area	Coal Seam Gas Potential (Mod-High)	Vegetated Coal Seam Gas Potential (Mod-High)
ESG Narrabri Petroleum Titles <sup>3</sup>	821,875 hectares	486,538 hectares	216,950 hectares
ESG 'Project Area'	85,000 hectares <sup>4</sup>	74,655 hectares	65,101 hectares

Therefore, the total area of moderate to high coal seam gas potential available to Eastern Star Gas

in the exploration licence is 6.52 times the size of moderate to high potential in the current 'project area'.

Assuming that the density of drill holes will be the same, this can be used to extrapolate from 1,100

drill holes proposed in the project area to an estimated 7,172 drill holes that are likely to be sunk across the total licence area.

With regard to native vegetation, the total vegetated area with moderate to high coal seam gas potential available to Eastern Star Gas in the exploration licence is 3.3 times the size of the vegetated area with potential in the current 'project area'.

Assuming that the intensity of impact on native vegetation will be the same, this can be used to extrapolate from 2,400 of native vegetation proposed for clearing in the current proposal, to an estimated 7,998 hectares of likely vegetation clearing across the total licence area.

<sup>2</sup> NSW Department of Mineral Resources. 2002. Mineral and Petroleum Resources Potential, NSW Western Regional Assessments; Brigalow Belt South. A project undertaken for the Resource and Conservation Assessment Council NSW WRA, Project Number WRA/20.

<sup>3</sup> PEL238, PAL2 & PPL3

<sup>4</sup> As described in the Preliminary Environmental Assessment for the project