

Submission
No 438

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

Dear Committee,

In order to properly and scientifically assess a range of question marks over coal seam gas(CSG) it is imperative that a comprehensive and lengthy moratorium be established over CSG exploration and mining and I urge the committee to do so.

The mid north coast is a high rainfall area and I am very concerned about CSG in this location in particular. I am concerned about leakages from saline CSG water holding dams/evaporation ponds in this environment. I am also deeply concerned about how this dirty saline water would be treated and disposed. The irrigation of treated CSG water onto plantation Eucalypts, a solution being implemented in Queensland would not be practical on the Mid North Coast as there is not enough cleared land and the fire risk from such plantations is incompatible with this highly populated belt. I urge the committee to widen the frame of reference where necessary so that all the practical considerations regarding the management of the CSG water are clearly understood, environmentally sound and acceptable. There are big question marks over this CSG water management issue.

I urge the committee to consider closely whether CSG will have a net negative impact on climate change through rogue methane gas emissions from the mined CSG seams and associated infrastructure.

I also ask the committee to consider closely the possible effects on the whole water cycle from CSG. If a result is that water tables are disturbed there may be serious environmental effects for all life from forest dieback to farmland rendered unproductive. There must be close independent scientific study and scrutiny on the effects on water tables. We should not rely on the data from the CSG companies and CSG consultants but seek independent objective investigation.

Financially any CSG industry in Australia should be paying a resource rent tax, environmental levy and 'water table bond' in addition to state royalties. The resource rent tax will help pay for local infrastructure upgrades and renewable energy investment, the environmental levy to pay for rehabilitation and offset vegetation/habitat loss and the 'water table bond' as a contingency fund for water table damage. Finally perhaps the committee should consider whether the CSG companies should have substantial insurance policies in place as a condition of their licences to pay for any water table repair and compensation and litigation that may ensue from damaged water tables. The public should not be financially responsible for damages that may arise from CSG failures now and in the future.