

**Submission
No 251**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

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COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES



**SUBMISSION:
Inquiry into Coal Seam Gas**

To: The Director
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From: Social Issues Committee
Country Women's Association of NSW

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The Social Issues Committee of the Country Women's Association of NSW wishes to thank the NSW Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 for the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry into Coal Seam Gas.

1. The environmental and health impacts of CSG activities including:

a. the effect on ground and surface water systems

Members are concerned about the potential for major damage to water systems, particularly the underground aquifers.

Possible pollution of water being used by the farming community and many inland towns because of the extraction process is a real threat and one that could be potentially disastrous.

The use of huge quantities of water from the Great Artesian Basin is also of concern because of the vast period of time taken for this resource to renew itself.

Irrigators have had their entitlements to water cut back and yet mining companies seem to have entitlement to extract as much water as they require without any regulation restrictions.

What will happen to the contaminated water once the process of extraction is finished? We must be assured that this contaminated water won't make its way back into the aquifers or where stock can access it.

2. The economic and social implications of CSG activities including those which affect:

a. Legal rights of property owners and property values

- Noise
- Stress associated with uncertainty about water quality in aquifers used by farming communities and towns
- Will property values decrease? Will this affect the equity situation of landholders?
- How far are these CSG companies allowed to push landholders into complying with their demands?
- Will land disturbed for CSG exploration and extraction be rehabilitated to the best possible standard? A set process needs to

be put in place to ensure that restoration is completed in a timely manner and by competent contractors.

- Will there be problems between CSG companies and landholders reaching agreement about access rights as is evident with pipeline companies in NSW already?
- Anyone who makes any sort of claim over land already owned by someone else should have to notify the owner in writing. How can a mining company be granted a licence to "explore" someone's land and the only notification they have to provide is an advertisement in the paper that doesn't give a lot of depth of detail?
- How will these extraction operations affect such things as tourism in the Hunter Valley? Who wants to spend a weekend amongst the vineyards and listen to the constant noise and deal with the traffic issues associated with the CSG activities?

b. Food security and agricultural activity

- Concern is felt about prime agricultural land being used for coal seam gas extraction instead of food production.
- How much of this land will be destroyed and become unsuitable for future agricultural practices?
- Can we rely on imported food always being available if we allow this prime land to be removed from our food production area? For example, why allow the rich Liverpool Plains and the Hunter Valley vineyard areas to be accessible to those wishing to extract coal seam gas? These areas are already huge producers of quality food products.
- Landholders who have had their property invaded by these companies still have to try and manage their properties. How then do they do this with constant activity by the extraction companies intruding into their workplace? With drilling operations, access roads and pipelines all taking valuable space away from farming operations, the potential for managing the property as it had been in the past is lost.

Social Issues Committee

Country Women's Association of NSW.