

Submission
No 573

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Name suppressed
Date received: 14/09/2011

Partially Confidential

Dear Sir

We would like to make the following comments to the inquiry into Coal Seam Gas

Overall, we consider that there should be an immediate moratorium on coal seam gas exploration and extraction in NSW due to the harmful environmental impacts combined with dubious greenhouse gas reduction potential.

We would like to raise issues under two broad themes:

Environmental concerns

Currently the consideration of environmental impacts resulting from coal seam gas exploration and extraction are woefully inadequate in NSW. There are a number of environmental concerns about Coal Seam gas exploration and production that currently cannot be addressed satisfactorily as knowledge of both detailed impacts and how to deal with them is lacking. These include:

- 1) extraction of coal seam gas (independent of whether fracking agents are used) releases contaminated water to the surface and may damage underground water resources. Water is an essential resource to both humans and other plants and animals and our future well being depends on this key resource. No short-term financial gain is worth putting this resource at risk.
- 2) there is evidence that long-term impacts of chemicals used in fracking or produced as a result of fracking will be detrimental to water aquifers and other water bodies and the subsequent impacts on human and natural ecosystem health.
- 3) increased land clearing. Clearing and fragmentation of habitat is recognised as a Key threatening process under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995, and the Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. The clearing of native vegetation for gas wells, roads and pipelines will have serious impacts on plants and animals in NSW (including a number of threatened species and ecological communities) not just in the clearing areas but in adjacent vegetation where there will be significant edge effects, increased fire frequency risk and increased risk of exotic animals and plants invasions. High Fire frequency is listed as a Key threatening process under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. This ongoing fragmentation, loss of habitat, changes to fire regimes and impacts of exotic species cannot be effectively compensated or recovered.
- 4) Coal seam gas extraction and fracking are now recognised internationally as one of 15 emerging global threats to biodiversity (Sutherland WJ et al 2001. Horizon scan of global conservation issues for 2011. *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* 26, 10-16.) A copy of this paper is attached .

Ability of CSG to effectively reduce Greenhouse gas emissions

The extent of potential greenhouse gas emission reductions by moving from coal to CSG is only just beginning to be adequately examined. Recent work has highlighted that CSG may effectively offer no advantages as a short-term transition fuel – see Wigley, TM (2011 online early) Coal to gas: the influence of methane leakage. *Climate Change* online early DOI 10.1007/s10584-011-0217-3. A copy of this paper is attached.

Yours sincerely