

**Submission
No 278**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Organisation: Caldera Environment Centre

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No amount of 'management' can correct the false premise that the product is a 'clean' fuel or that the process is 'safe'. I quote your Terms of Reference '1.g.) Relative air quality and environmental impacts compared to alternative fossil fuels.' This should read 1. g.) Relative air quality and environmental impacts compared to 100% renewable energy. How can this inquiry be taken seriously as a proper 'report on the environmental, economic and social impacts of coal seam gas (CSG) activities,' if you do not consider all the science and technologies currently available.

Global warming and water resources are two of the big issues for the planet in the new millennium. Australia's decision makers know this but seem to be frozen in denial. Carbon, and its burnt product CO₂, methane emissions, water availability and quality are at the root of our very strong objection to coal seam gas mining. A Cornell University Report found that non-conventional gas emissions (CSG) should not be considered as a cleaner alternative to coal or oil, compared to natural gas it produces approx. 30% more emissions (emissions are increased significantly in the liquification process required for export). The majority of gas is to be exported primarily to China. Also, fugitive emissions of coal seam gas (methane) must also be factored into the overall environmental impacts - 'methane's global warming potential (GWP) – or warming potency compared to carbon dioxide – is around 23. That means it's 23 times more effective at trapping heat in the atmosphere than CO₂ over a 100-year period. So adding one tonne of methane to the atmosphere would have the same effect as adding 23 tonnes of CO₂.' I quote from the Australia Academy of Science. We need to transition straight to 100% renewable energy's, a plan already worked out in fine detail by Melbourne University's Energy Research Institute, go to: <http://beyondzeroemissions.org/>. We have the sunshine and we have abundant wind around our coastline, which is where most people live. If the Germans, Spanish, Danes and other countries can do it why can't we? Money can't repair the planet. It makes sense that while we are reaping the benefits (financially) from our out dated, out moded fossil fuel industry, right now we could be using the profits to build the needed infrastructure for 100% renewable energy.

Our objections to the Coal Seam Gas Mining industry are:

1. The wrong idea in 2011 in Australia when forced with the joint problems of Methane and CO₂ pollution, water pollution and water scarcity!
2. Water quality and availability are possibly the most important problems facing humanity in general, but NSW farmers in particular; both are threatened by the industry.
3. Chemical contamination from coal seam gas mining threatens our future food security.
4. The rewards are simply not worth the risks.
5. There is ample evidence in southern Queensland, the Illawarra and in the USA of the damage done to water basins through coal mining in general and coal seam gas mining in particular.
6. Coal seam gas is not the 'clean' fuel it is claimed to be for several reasons: it produces CO₂ and the even more damaging fugitive methane greenhouse gas, the extraction process is energy intensive, there is always accompanying environmental damage.
7. There is already widespread opposition to coal seam gas mining particularly in northern NSW and South East Queensland which will become more strident as people come face to face with the damaging reality of this destructive environmentally unsustainable industry.
8. The Future Fund and Sovereign Risk Fund for the nation should be the minerals left in the ground and an undamaged environment for future generations to enjoy.
9. The principle of ecologically sustainability and the precautionary principle should be front of mind when conducting any inquiry into industrial development.

Conclusions:

The potential long term risks will prove to be far greater than any short term benefits, should any properly conducted cost benefit analysis be undertaken.

The Caldera Environment Centre urges the NSW Government to place an immediate and indefinite moratorium on coal seam gas exploration and extraction in this state. A broad independent inquiry focusing primarily on ecological/environmental sustainability (backed by 'peer reviewed' scientific facts) and including a detailed cost benefit analysis, should be conducted, and made public to the community.

Yours sincerely,

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