

**Submission
No 34**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Mr Steve Higgs

Date received: 21/08/2011

My name is Steve Higgs. My wife and I plus our young 3 kids over 20 years ago wanted to help preserve our environment by planting 10,000 Olive trees every year for 6 years .

This we achieved after great effort and pain, in Merriwa, NSW 2329 [which is at the very top of the Hunter Valley and is a beautiful rural community at the foot of the Liverpool ranges].

Now our 60,000 Olive trees and the whole Merriwa community is threatened by CSG .

To preserve water, my family installed over 300 km of water drippers to provide up to a tiny 1.6 liters of water per hour through 5 drippers per tree -so as not to waste water.

This water plus all the water for the Merriwa town comes from an aquifer between 700 and 1000 feet below ground.

What I please ask your committee to insist upon is that -
"any developer of CSG or any other energy source will give a satisfactory undertaking that, should the flow of water or quality of town water be impacted by their activity [either at the source of our aquifer or by drilling/mining through our flow] they will fully restore the Merriwa communities amenities"
My family will this year alone provide over 150,000 liters of Extra Virgin Olive Oil to Australian consumers and we hope to be able to replace much more imported product in future years.

However a polluted environment or water problems could well negatively impact our production, which is projected to grow strongly over the next 100 years -this we can measure, so it is critical this essential oil is protected from short term exploitation.

The Merriwa community was recently split because some drought affected farmers were tempted to sell out to promoters of Wind Farms .It seems that even with big subsidies Wind Farms at Merriwa may not happen because of a ground swell of community concern .However we still do not trust our council to protect our amenities because of the big dollars waved around by the big resource companies [some of whom are sneaking around buying up strategically located farms-in innocent looking names]

Accordingly it must be our Government that protects the most important asset we hold in trust for our children's, children -that is agricultural land.

Please will you ask your committee to consider my concerns?

Thank you for your actions to address this major problem

regards

Steve Higgs