

Submission
No 534

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Name Suppressed
Date received: 6/09/2011

Partially Confidential

APPENDIX A.

In addition to the issues I raised in my letter to Tony Windsor, I note with dismay the many cynical attempts by coal mining and CSG industries to appease local communities with the promise of jobs growth. While I have no doubt that local economies will benefit financially from nearby coal operations in the short term the construction of mining villages (capable of housing hundreds of miners) doesn't sound like a recipe for encouraging such personnel to become fully integrated members of local communities. Rather it is a recipe for fly-in-fly-out miners to have a bed for the night during their shifts before returning 'home' to their real communities of belonging.

Are we really supposed to believe that those who control big mining interests are seriously concerned for the community infrastructure and values of the people who live near their large open-cut operations? Is this what groups like Whitehaven and Santos mean by 'developing and maintaining a locally based workforce' that 'enjoys being part of the local community?' Do the miners really 'bring their families' to become part of the local communities? Perhaps someone needs to do the research to discover the truth. While Tony Haggarty (Whitehaven Managing Director) says that "we don't believe that a permanent fly-in, fly-out workforce is a good outcome for the community" can we have any confidence that the mining workforce will have any commitment to the community outside of the limited life of the mines.

Professor Bill Mitchell of Newcastle University has gone on record (Newc. Herald 9/7/11) as saying that "coal is a dying industry" and asked the "What then?" question of governments that keep investing in coal infrastructure. What will we be left with 'post coal' in the way of communities that allowed themselves to become dependent on that industry and environments scarred by the short term after-effects of mining operations.

There are many other examples of governments 'steering' investment away from industries that are believed to be having a deleterious effect on either people or environments. Whether whaling, timber-getting, asbestos or uranium mining for example, governments world-wide have shown leadership in looking for alternatives despite the loss of jobs in those industries. If the South Australian government can change regulations to declare the iconic Flinders Ranges off-limits to mining surely NSW government has the capacity to decide whether mineral resources are automatically 'available' to the highest bidder.

Which raises the question of whatever laws dictate that ground-surface considerations are subservient to the need to access minerals beneath? Are these laws the ones that were drafted at a time when mining meant a relatively small disruption to the surface by some blokes with picks and shovels? If so do the laws themselves need revisiting in the light of the massive disruption that is caused by today's open-cut operations as in the Hunter Valley. Surely it is the government's role on behalf of the people to sometimes arbitrate for higher priorities in the long term interest

Don't allow big mining interests be the sole determinant of our futures!