

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Name suppressed

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The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

ToR 1. The environmental and health impact of CSG activities...

It concerns us greatly that Coal seam gas (CSG) mining is a serious threat to water resources due to contamination of groundwater aquifers, including un known cumulative impacts. This is an issue of particular concern as a large area of PEL 458 involves the Tomago sandbeds (proposed Fullerton Cove and Grahamstown pilot wells) and provides potable water to Port Stephens residents. Coal seam gas is a fossil fuel and a significant source of greenhouse gas pollution. Whilst it may be a cleaner fuel than coal (expert opinion still seems divided) coal seam gas, when used as a fuel, would still make a major contribution to climate change, particularly when fugitive emissions and any liquefaction prior to export are fully considered.

The potential for fugitive emissions – of the highly polluting methane – appears significant, and poses an unacceptable risk.

ToR 2. The economic and social implications of CSG activities ...

Local Government and local communities are currently largely excluded from the planning approval processes, particularly for exploration and pilot production of CSG, and there are inadequate opportunities for public participation in these decisions. Once pilot production is allowed, the mining companies and their investors have expectations which it will then be difficult to resist. Environmental assessments, and their public release, come too late in the current planning processes to properly serve on of their intended purposes; i.e. to assist decisions about whether to allow drilling in the first place.

ToR 3. The role of CSG in meeting the future energy needs of NSW

We submit that coal seam gas is not needed to meet the future energy needs of NSW. Most gas in NSW is and will be extracted for export, not to meet local energy needs. We understand that CSG, when used for electricity generation, yields more than 40 times the amount of greenhouse gas per unit of energy generated than solar or wind. NSW urgently needs to move speedily towards a future where renewable energy supplies the bulk of our electricity. There are more than sufficient renewable resources in NSW to make this a viable alternative, including vast solar thermal resources in the major areas where CSG is now proposed this would provide more jobs during the construction. A massive expansion in coal seam gas production would seriously delay the transition to renewable energy alternatives.

ToR 5. The impact similar industries have had in other jurisdictions.

I understand that CSG mining both in Queensland, and overseas, has been found to have many of the concerns I have about its development in NSW.

I call on the Committee to recommend much stronger safeguards and to in effect reject coal seam gas as a significant part of NSW's energy future – it is not needed and has too many risks associated with it as an industry.

Yours Sincerely