

**Submission  
No 724**

## **INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS**

**Organisation:** Concerned landholders and residents of Baerami Creek, Baerami, Kerrabee, Widden Valley, Martindale Creek and surrounding areas

**Date received:** 7/09/2011

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7<sup>th</sup> September 2011

## **Community Submission**

Submission to NSW General Purpose Standing Committee No 5 of the Legislative Council - regarding the environmental, health, economics and social impacts of coal seam gas activities and it's role in meeting future energy needs of NSW.

This submission was drafted as a response to the community needs in our local area. I was approached by several people regarding the need for such a document.

People genuinely wanted to -

- "have a say" but didn't know how to go about it.
- didn't have available time in the narrow timeframe available.
- weren't confident in their writing ability to convey their feeling's
- one landholder is overseas promoting and trying to sell his agricultural products.

I have endeavoured to embrace all major concerns that have been raised at our two public meetings and literally from the hundreds of conversations and emails that have come my way on this topic.

The submission could not be extravagant in detail or length. People had to read and understand it, before signing.

I hope you will accept this submission as it was intended – an outpouring of community outrage.

We have gathered over 180 signatures from local landholders and residents. I am sure more would have signed it if time had permitted.

The only members of the community who didn't sign were those who were -

- a) Lodging their own submissions – all rejecting CSG exploration and production.
- b) Absentee landholders who couldn't be contacted
- c) People who weren't home when doorknocking took place.

I can state without fear of contradiction that not one single person in Baerami Creek, Baerami, Widden Valley or Martindale Creek didn't support the general thrust of NO CSG in our area.

One landholder at Kerrabee would not sign our submission. They have already allowed CSG exploration on their property for financial consideration only.

In good faith and on behalf of the communities of Baerami Creek, Baerami, Widden Valley, Kerrabee, Martindale Creek and surrounding areas.

Rowan Smith

## **Submission to "Impacts of Coal Seam Gas Inquiry"**

The undersigned of this submission totally reject coal seam gas exploration and mining in the Baerami Creek, Baerami, Kerrabee, Widden Valley, Martindale Creek and surrounding area's.

In this submission we are addressing our concerns to the 'Inquiry Terms of Reference' where applicable.

### **1. The environmental and health impact of CSG**

#### **(a) *Effect on ground and surface water systems***

- We oppose coal seam gas for the huge risks it poses to our surface water and underground aquifers:
- Enterprises in our local area include – world renowned thoroughbred studs, cattle dairies, olive farms, pecan farms, vineyards, commercial beef cattle, extensive lucerne hay production, apiarists and various other niche enterprises, which sell at the local Farmers Markets.

#### **(b,c) *Risks – Effects related to the use of chemicals, and hydraulic fracturing***

The potential risk of contamination and poisoning is totally unacceptable, particularly if the mining companies engage in 'fracking' with the accompanying chemicals.

#### ***Dewatering of the coal seam beds to allow gas flow is of huge concern - eg***

- *Where to store this saline and sometimes toxic water is an immense problem.*
- *Evaporation ponds on our floodplain flats would be unthinkable.*
- *Environmental damage from leaking or breached dams could be catastrophic.*
- *Storing this water in tanks would be impracticable.*
- *To contemplate trucking the immense volume of water out seems ridiculous.*

(d) ***Effect on Crown Lands including travelling stock routes and State Forests***

- **Wollemi National Park** - is part of the World Heritage Listed Greater Blue Mountains National Park and is home to the Wollemi Pine. The Park surrounds and divides our valleys.
- Martindale, Widden and particularly Baerami Creek are long narrow valleys – largely no more than one kilometre wide, with National Park on each side. The economics of scale in developing a gas field within these narrow confines needs close scrutiny.
- One must wonder if the miners intend extracting gas from under the National Park in order to justify the development of their Exploratory License.
- *Wollemi National Park had no depth restriction placed on it when it was gazetted.*
- In other words it is regarded as 'to the centre of the earth' – no mining whatsoever.
- How will mining activities be monitored several hundred metres underground, when gas companies can presently horizontally drill for up to 8 km's and fracc up to 400 metres?
- **Fire regulations** - Methane gas is an odourless, colourless, asphyxiant gas that is extremely flammable.
- The process of drilling and extracting gas involves heavy machinery.
- There are inherent fire risks associated with the whole process.
- However coal seam gas mining is **exempt from Fire Regulations**.
- In our world of "forecasted extreme weather conditions", this defies logic.
- This perhaps typifies the lack of adequate regulations embracing the coal seam gas industry.

## **2. The economic and social implications of CSG activities**

### **(a) *Legal rights of property owners and property values***

#### **Adverse impact on rural land**

- Most farms in this area are small acreage – an average of 200 ha. Any interference from exploratory work or coal seam gas production would have an extremely adverse impact on whoever's paddock it is in.
- The noise, dust, potential gas leaks and unsightliness of drilling rigs would be totally unacceptable.
- Access roads dividing small paddocks into smaller ones again, would certainly affect machinery movements such as ploughing, haymaking, seeding, harvesting as well as interfere with stock movement and watering.
- Compensation to landowners subjected to exploration and production is totally inadequate when considering the revenue generated.

### **(b) *Food security and agricultural activity***

- Every farming enterprise is dependent on clean reliable water for irrigation, stock and household requirements.
- Our prime agricultural land together with abundant underground water, underpin every farming enterprise in our area.
- Australia's growing population as well as increasing global demand for food, make food security a major priority.
- Policies need to be in place to encourage agricultural production rather than to destroy, inhibit or curtail it.

**(e) Local Government including provision of local/regional infrastructure and local planning control mechanisms - impacts**

- The infrastructure associated with coal seam gas production such as pipelines, compressor stations and well heads are all unacceptable infringements on anyone's property or lifestyle.
- Local roads could not be expected to cope with the thousands of vehicular movements needed to service the coal seam gas exploration and extraction processes.
- The roads up local valleys are only one car wide in many places. With so many extra vehicles, especially trucks, the risk of a serious accident is considerable, particularly at school bus times.

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

- Before we go down this path – let us not leave any alternate avenue of possibility unexplored i.e. Solar, Wind, Water and Geothermal.....
- CSG could well play a part in meeting future energy needs BUT NOT at the expense of productive agricultural land or at the expense of our water.
- Most of the proposed CSG production is destined for export.
- If development of CSG resources was limited to fulfilling NSW's needs only, then a more sensible debate would result.
- The use of agricultural land, environmentally sensitive areas and potential interference with aquifers could all be avoided.

## 5. The Impact similar industries have had in other jurisdictions

- Land values - As soon as coal seam gas mining is mentioned in an area land values can expect to fall at least 30% and often more – that is if you could find a buyer. This has happened at Bunnan near Scone, NSW.

### Buffer Zone

- The EDO in it's submission on the NSW Coal and Gas Strategy 15<sup>th</sup> April 2011 called for "mandatory buffer zones to exclude any mining activities within 1 km adjacent to rivers, wetlands and water courses".
- There have also been suggestions from conservation groups that a similar buffer zone should exist around National Parks.
- A Strategic Land Use Policy is forecast to identify prime agricultural land which will be excluded from mining activity.
- If any one of these three proposals was adopted then NO CSG MINING would be permitted in our local area,

### Social license

- At a coal seam gas information meeting held at Baerami Hall on 16th July 2011, Muswellbrook Mayor – Martin Rush called on Planet Gas CEO – Ian Halstead to withdraw his mining operations from the area because he did not have a 'social license'.
- Ian Halstead said he would consult with Planet Gas's board of directors and reply in a fortnight. **No reply has been received to date.**
- Jeremy Buckingham MLC addressed this same meeting **and his call for a 12 month moratorium on coal seam gas exploration was met with thunderous applause.**



- **Nearly 200 members of the local community** and surrounding areas attended.
- Not one person from the local community spoke in support of coal seam gas.
- Clearly coal seam gas mining companies have no '**social license**' to operate in this area.

**Supporting news items:**

- *ABC News - August 28 2011 by Michael Atkin*
- *Mining magnate Clive Palmer has launched a scathing attack on Australia's coal seam gas industry, saying the technology is unproven and could have a devastating environmental impact.*
- *"Coal seam gas technology currently used in Australia is lethal and will kill Australians, poison our water and destroy the land." he said.*
- *"The risk if they don't get that right is the contamination of the water table with things like arsenic and other carcinogens" he also said.*

This submission is only a brief account of some of the many concerns which confront our local community. Many people will lodge their own submissions which will no doubt deal more thoroughly with the issues raised above and many other issues which they consider relevant.

I have fully read this submission and sign accordingly

## **Submission to "Impacts of Coal Seam Gas Inquiry"**

I have fully read this submission and sign accordingly

**[Submission included signatures of 185 concerned landowners of the Baerami Creek, Baerami, Kerrabee, Widden Valley, Martindale Creek and surrounding areas]**

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