

**Submission  
No 377**

## **INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS**

**Name:** Mrs Lauren Boers

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Lauren Boers

13 September 2011

**RE: Coal Seam Gas within Australia**

I am writing this submission to the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 to ensure my thoughts and concerns regarding the Coal Seam Gas (CSG) industry within Australia are heard, I hold the belief that our resources are for the benefit of the whole community and not the few who stand to make considerable profits from the industry. Australia's resources don't just include the minerals or gas deposits; they include the entire eco-system, from our flora and fauna to the water systems and natural land formations. These systems rely on balance, they exist due to balance; and disrupting, re-engineering or mining parts of the system without looking at the whole will cause irreparable damage for generations to come.

Term of reference 2; It is especially frustrating to witness the social fracturing within the community over these issues, there is strong manipulation from companies who make serious profits from our resources; non-renewable resources. They do so for the benefit of their shareholders, which they would like to believe are the general population; however they're not, I for one, do not own shares in a single company which plunders our non-renewable resources.

Term of reference 1; Some key concerns I have about the CSG industry are in relation to how they affect the water systems include:

- From my reading, they require massive amounts of water for drilling and fracturing, there are not many; if any, regions within Australia that have the volume of water required without disturbing ground water aquifers
- Of all the water they do use, a huge proportion of it ends up as waste water; contaminated in holding pools; besides the contaminants, large quantities of salt are also brought to the surface
- Waste water on flood plains or water catchments is simply a completely unmanageable risk; and completely unacceptable
- Treatment requires even greater resources, and more by-products
- Once you inject something into the ground, there is no failsafe way of predicting where and when it will eventually leech out

Already in such a relatively young industry within Australia there has been mishandling, including:

- Discharge of treated 'waste' water by Eastern Star Gas into a creek in the Pilliga
- Exploratory drilling near Woronora Dam in water catchment areas of Sydney and the Illawarra
- Drilling near the Tomago sandbeds water catchment area in the Hunter

All mining has a massive effect on the natural landscape of this country, personally I was horrified during a recent drive through the Hunter Valley, the amount of land cleared, re-created, never to be the same; it is an industry that appears intent on squeezing this land for every penny it holds.

The extent the industry has on the general landscape can be observed at:

- Pilliga CSG mining will clear at least 2,400 hectares and fragment 85,000 hectares of public lands, including State Forests and State Conservation Areas;
- Around Putty, drilling is planned next to the World Heritage-listed Wollemi NP, have you even seen how beautiful this place is!
- In north-west NSW, Travelling Stock Routes are targeted for drilling and gas pipeline infrastructure

Water is one of the most basic building blocks to life on this planet, threatening the supply of our water or the fragile systems which exist around our water supplies should never ever be contemplated or considered a viable option and the supposed need to mine CSG is only being justified because of the lack of investment and initiative in renewable energy.

Term of reference 3; Most of the gas produced within NSW isn't even being used for our own energy consumption, instead it's being exported – how can anyone justify this position, beside greed.

Term of reference 4; There are simply too many unknowns and risks associated with the industry, one look at the United States should be enough to convince people that it just simply isn't worth it. The legislation in place is there for a reason and this industry should never be exempted from any of it, why is CSG mining exempt from a number of other environmental statutes, including the Native Vegetation Act 2003 and the Water Management Act 2000? Why are they allowed to generate revenue from public land? (which effectively privatises it) and, why isn't Federal legislation at the exploration phase properly enforced – ie extensive exploration without getting Federal approval in the Pilliga.

At the very least I would like to see:

- A full moratorium on all forms of coal seam gas drilling until the environmental, social and health impacts have been rigorously and independently assessed.
- Coal seam gas exploration and mining to be made subject to all relevant environmental legislation, including the native vegetation and water management laws.
- The provision of standing to ensure that the community has full legal rights to challenge and enforce environmental laws under which coal seam gas companies are operating.
- The provision of a right in the Petroleum (Onshore) Act to allow landholders to refuse consent for coal seam gas exploration or production on their land.
- A prohibition on coal seam gas exploration and mining in important bushland, valuable farmland, groundwater aquifers, residential areas and public lands.
- A requirement that all chemicals used in coal seam gas drilling or fracking must be assessed by the chemical regulator for use for that purpose before being approved for use.

Kind Regards

Lauren Boers