

**Submission
No 785**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Mrs Megan Kuhn

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The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Inquiry into Coal Seam Gas

I have wondered how to show you the disbelief, frustration and fear we feel as property owners as we are threatened by the rapidly expanding, unregulated Coal Seam Gas industry.

So, I want to use an analogy that you may connect with.

Picture a successful retail store in inner Sydney that has been lovingly run by the same family for generations, employing supportive staff and relying on the sale of products their customers have come to trust. They have continuously developed it along the way to keep it a viable business and they have put their hearts and souls into making every day count.

Then, out of the blue, a new industry has permission to infiltrate their safety zone, without their consent. Their lives are thrown into chaos. Firstly, they ask for common sense to support their pleas for help as they sense how detrimental this will be to their business but no one with any vision for a sustainable future is listening. They desperately try to maintain their business while the infiltrators bring in huge numbers of their own staff, heavy equipment and rules that are not sympathetic to them or the needs of the business. Noise is made consistently, 24 hours a day, while it creates

toxic dust and piles of waste that are also toxic, which are to be left in place permanently. The family and their staff are now continuously exposed to a serious health threat and everything they sell is also contaminated by the toxic waste.

Then the store owners are informed that there are other sites to be developed within the store and it spreads, further limiting their productive workspace. Those sites are to be linked by a network which must stay in place and there will be permanent access available to each of the sites by the new industry workers along with more noisy equipment and toxic chemicals.

They try to maintain their business but over time they can't sell their contaminated goods as they are a health risk to the consumer. Also, they find out their property has been seriously devalued due to the ongoing damage caused. Finally, after many years of this ongoing stress, personally and to the business, the industry announce "they have removed what they've come for" and leave. There has been no real support from the Government or the industry, who have just taken what they wanted and sold it overseas to make huge profits from a lucrative venture.

What is left behind is a disaster zone, piles of material, toxic wastes and broken lives and there was nothing in place to ensure financial help to rehabilitate the devastation. In fact, it cannot be rehabilitated; the damage they caused is permanent.

The new industry spread beyond one store and has left entire communities dismembered.

I feel and know that this is a realistic analogy with what we as individuals and Australia as a country are facing with the Coal Seam Gas industry. Is that what you want?

Megan Kuhn

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