

**Submission
No 451**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Organisation: Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils Inc
(NOROC)

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20 September 2011

Ms Beverly Duffy
The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000
Email: gpscno5@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Duffy

RE: COAL SEAM GAS INQUIRY – SUBMISSION

The Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils (NOROC) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the NSW Legislative Council's General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5's Coal Seam Gas Inquiry.

NOROC represents the local governments of Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed on the far north coast of New South Wales, as well as utility provider Rous Water and catchment authority Richmond River County Council. Together we serve close to 300 000 residents.

NOROC supports in principle the investigation of alternative sources of energy to traditional coal mining and, in particular, the potential for coal seam gas to play a critical role in moving to a low carbon economy. On behalf of the Northern Rivers community we emphatically urge that strict environmental controls apply to every stage of the extraction, production and distribution of gas.

The key issues for NOROC in relation to coal seam gas mining are:

- Protecting the health and public safety of people living in and around areas of coal seam gas mining activity.
- Potential conflicts with:
 - Existing agricultural land use;
 - The unique and rich biodiversity of the Northern Rivers;

- The Aboriginal heritage of the Bundjalung people of the Northern Rivers.

NOROC is also concerned about the potential impact of coal seam gas mining on the tourism industry.

- The need to properly manage the cumulative impacts of coal seam gas mining such as noise, dust, blasting and lighting given that exploratory drills operate continuously for long periods of time.
- Concerns about the treatment and disposal of produced water and the impact of coal seam gas extraction on water tables and aquifers and unintended methane release from existing bores. The broader issues of hydraulic fracturing, the chemicals used and the potential effects on groundwater are also of concern.
- Site rehabilitation must be undertaken in a progressive and integrated manner, as currently councils do not have complete and detailed information as to the location and condition of drilling sites. It is essential this information is available in future property searches.
- The required upgrades to transport infrastructure, in particular track upgrades, the associated impacts on regional and local roads and any ongoing regulatory responsibilities for councils and the associated costs.
- The Northern Rivers, by virtue of its proximity to Queensland, has a number of cross-border issues that it has to regularly manage. A pipeline that would deliver gas to Queensland that has been extracted from NSW could come at a cost to Northern Rivers' communities.

NOROC appreciates the opportunity to make this submission on behalf of member councils in the Northern Rivers and would welcome the opportunity to speak at the Public Hearing in Alstonville on 21 September 2011. For further information please contact Ann Lewis, Acting Executive Officer on 0404046152.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Lewis
Acting Executive Officer