

**Submission  
No 684**

## **INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS**

**Name:** Ms Lynda Fletcher

**Date received:** 14/09/2011

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Dear Sirs

I, Lynda Fletcher, am making this submission to the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 Inquiry into Coal Seam Gas Mining (CSG) in NSW to register my concern over CSG mining in NSW and especially the permission granted to APEX Energy (APEX) for PELS 442 & 444 in the Northern Illawarra. My submission addresses the terms of reference for this enquiry.

There is a substantial and growing body of evidence that coal seam gas mining poses substantial risks. These risks, which are not fully understood or researched in NSW, include:

1. CSG mining contaminates water

- CSG mining always involves contaminated water and so poses unacceptable risks to water supply, the environment and human health.

2. Hydraulic Fracturing (fracking) is a dangerous and unsuitable technology to employ

- Hydraulic fracturing or 'fracking' is used to release CSG. It involves injecting large volumes of water, sand and toxic chemicals into the ground to fracture coal and release the methane gas
- CSG mining uses fracking to be viable and will be used in at least 80% of Australian CSG wells

3. CSG releases more methane gas in the environment

- Much of the previously trapped methane is not captured by CSG mining. Estimates of over 35% have been made by leading US universities. Therefore substantial fugitive methane escapes into the atmosphere. The greenhouse house effect of methane to be 100+ times that of CO<sub>2</sub> over 20 years, as bad as, or far worse than, coal over its lifecycle.

4. CSG infrastructure has a large and damaging foot-print

- Production fields typically require drilling well pads every 400-900 metres, with networks of pipelines and roads to get plant and equipment in and wastewater and gas out. This requires extensive land clearing for well heads (100 sq m+), storage tanks, containment ponds, roads, pipelines and fire lines.

5. CSG and the Illawarra upper escarpment of the Northern Illawarra

- Fifteen exploration wells have been approved in PELs 442 & 444, with 140+ production wells likely
- 7 of the 15 are in Sydney Catchment Authority 'Special Areas', which have restrictions on land use and access to protect our water supply, the rest abut those Special Areas
- The approved wells are adjacent to upland swamps that feed and clean the adjacent water catchments, including the Georges and Hacking river systems

6. Government action to protect communities from CSG in NSW

NSW is not as advanced as Queensland in the production extraction of CSG and so the state has an opportunity to avoid the mistakes made in Queensland and the USA that are leading to substantial damage to environments and public health.

I therefore call on the Inquiry to exercise a precautionary approach to CSG by advising the Premier to instigate:

- a Royal Commission into all aspects of coal seam gas mining
- a moratorium on coal seam gas mining pending the outcome of the Royal Commission
- a ban on fracking and similar coal bed 'stimulation' technologies and techniques

Thank you.