

## **INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS**

**Name:** Mrs Madeleine Adams

**Date received:** 31/08/2011

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The Director,

General Purpose Standing Committee Number 5.

Parliament House, N.S.W.

31.8.2011

Dear Sir,

Re: Rapid Expansion of Coal Seam Gas (CSG) Extraction in N.S.W.

I write to register my extreme concern regarding the current plans for the rapid expansion of an industry that does not have a safe track record and one which threatens our most valuable commodity - surface and underground water. Even the APPEA has admitted that fragile, natural aquifers will be damaged when wells are drilled. Most country families rely on a supply of rainwater for use or bore water when rainwater is scarce. If bore water from the aquifers is contaminated both humans and stock could be poisoned. Damaged aquifers cannot be repaired.

There have been various media reports on gas leaking from poorly maintained gas wells up in Queensland, with methane gas escaping into the atmosphere. Such fugitive gases are dangerous for both the local population and the environment. Look at the problems near Newcastle at the moment with Orica unable to control leakages etc. (Page 1 SMH 31/8/2011)

The ponds of water resulting from various gas extraction methods evaporate to deposit toxic matter on good land. Wells are sunk in close proximity to households and stock, roads between wells hinder the use of agricultural land. Extraction methods could use chemicals that the National Toxics Network (NTN) says have not been assessed by industrial chemicals regulator NICNAS. The coal seam gas industry says that most of the chemicals used in fracking are harmless but the NTN says this is misleading. Even if a well is drilled without fracking, the water released from the coal seam is saline and can contain naturally occurring heavy metals and hydrocarbons. Fracking chemicals just add to this toxic mix that could find its way into our precious groundwater system.

This toxic industry cannot co-exist with prime agricultural production nor with communities who are producing an amazing supply of fresh food and produce. The world is facing food shortages in the coming years so why allow prime agricultural land and water systems to be decimated?

According to the Galaxy Poll reported in the SMH on 26.8.2011, more than two thirds of Australians support a moratorium on coal seam gas mining in cities and towns until more is known about its environmental impacts. I am sure these people would also want this practise banned from prime agricultural land if they realised that their food and water supply would be threatened.

My recommendation would be that Government demands a moratorium on the exploration of CSG until we have more information about the methods of extraction used in this industry and their repercussions. The Government should also research the backgrounds of mining companies wanting to extract CSG in NSW to check their track record regarding community welfare and environmental health.

The CSG industry cannot co-exist with the agricultural industry and I recommend that prime agricultural land be secured from marauding miners. If the Government feels that this industry is not safe to practise in National Parks because of the damage to the environment it might cause there, then surely, it is not safe to practise on prime agricultural land.

Yours faithfully,

Madeleine Adams