

**Submission
No 61**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Ms Karin Hensen

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The govt. needs to curtail the almost unfettered access that mining currently has over land. Much more control and restrictions are necessary to safeguard the environment and the welfare of the community. In all existing and future approvals for mining tenures and leases the impact on the health of communities, the impact on agricultural land, water and the environment should be the number one consideration. A full moratorium on all forms of CSG drilling is necessary until the environmental, social and health impacts have been rigorously and independently assessed.

The 'balance' has been so much in the favour of mining companies and their profits over the interests of the environment and the welfare and health of the community that there needs to be a drastic action taken to redress this so called balance. Protecting the environment is essential and any arguments based on giving economic interests precedence over protecting the environment are spurious because in the long term the economy is completely dependent on the health of the natural environment.

As a minimum there should be areas where CSG mining needs to be completely prohibited, such as in important bushland, valuable farmland, groundwater aquifers, residential areas and public lands. If CSG mining is to be considered at all then the distance from these areas needs to be determined by environmental scientists based on evidence, community consultation. It is absolutely imperative that local communities have a greater involvement and say over the process of granting exploration tenements. The community needs to have full legal rights to challenge and enforce environmental laws under which CSG companies operate and landholders need the right to refuse consent for CSG exploration or production on their land.

The NSW government needs to listen to the outrage of ordinary Australians and take action to reverse the hold the CSG industry is gaining over land. CSG mining threatens water, food, rights, health and is NOT a clean green transition fuel. Scientific evidence is showing that it probably has a bigger GHG footprint than coal. Better environmental protection legislation is necessary and governments need to stop acting on behalf of big business and protect the interests of ordinary Australians instead. Companies should never be allowed to threaten our precious water. The precautionary principle MUST always be applied. CSG mining has not been, and probably never can be, proved SAFE.

It is totally deluded to even consider that the government can have some sort of a strategy to control how water and gas will react and move once CSG mining commences. When the pressure is removed and/or the well is fracked the gas will move and cannot be stopped. Huge environmental damage and water contamination will be an inevitable but completely unacceptable consequence. Short term gains need to be weighed up against long term environmental degradation including the impact of Global warming. CSG is NOT a clean green transition fuel. Scientific evidence is mounting showing that it probably has a bigger GHG footprint than coal.

Instead of CSG the Beyond Zero Emissions Plan outlines a technically feasible and economically attractive way that Australia can transition to 100% renewable energy within ten years. This plan relying on solar, wind, hydro and biomass is what could potentially be achieved given some political backbone. Some coal mining jobs will be lost but many more jobs would be created. The Plan will create up to 80,000 jobs from installation and over 45,000 jobs in operations and maintenance (ref.2). Currently 30,000 people work in the coal industry. I personally think every household could be rationed a

limit of “cheap” electricity and those over this limit would pay double (or more) ensuring pensioners and low-income families would not be over burdened and encouraging a reduction in all household emissions.

That some politicians can somehow look at this equation balancing the profits of CSG against the environment and conclude that the result are positive in favour of CSG mining can logically only be achieved if the you don't factor in the long term costs to the environment. The extraction of CSG has the potential to turn huge areas of our country into an industrial wasteland and to irreversibly contaminate our precious water supplies. The fact that the NSW government is prepared to allow companies to continue CSG mining for short term for profit makes them not only criminally negligent but morally bankrupt.