

**Submission
No 277**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Organisation: Byron Saving Australia's Natural Environment
Date received: 6/09/2011

Dear Jeremy & the Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee no. 5,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the coal seam gas industry in NSW and in Australia, as a citizen and as a representative of the BSANE (Byron Saving Australia's Natural Environment) group, who now has approximately 2,000 registrations, 262 facebook members and about 35 regular attendees to the weekly meetings. This submission is written on behalf of the group and authorised by the president and committee members.

We require from our government:

- 1) A full moratorium on all forms of coal seam gas drilling until the environmental, social and health impacts have been rigorously and independently assessed.
- 2) Sustainability needs to become a key focus of parliamentary decision making. There is an urgent need to strengthen legislation on mining and planning by requiring that decisions under these legislative frameworks must take place within sustainable bounds whereby environmental, social and long-term economic sustainability is fully considered.
- 3) Far more pro-active promotion, support and provision of sustainable energy alternatives that do not adversely affect the future of the Australian natural environment and its citizens, such as those developed by Beyond Zero Emissions.
- 4) The completion of a comprehensive water inventory of Australian sub-surface water systems and a recognition of potential mining impacts on these.
- 5) Review of landholder rights to prevent mining on their land and the provision of standing to ensure that the community has full legal rights to challenge and enforce environmental laws under which coal seam gas companies are operating.
- 6) The provision of a right in the Petroleum (Onshore) Act to allow landholders to refuse consent for coal seam gas exploration or production on their land.
- 7) The introduction of guaranteed community rights, and the provision of a 'social licence' that is required prior to at least any developments of a state or federal significance, whilst monitoring and responsiveness of community reporting to identify any breaches of conditions of mining operators is increased.
- 8) To address a suite of measures to identify cumulative impacts of mining.
- 9) To recognise strategic land-use plans under the law, in particular ensuring the future viability of farmland that will continue to enable food security for Australia in the future.
- 10) Coal seam gas exploration and mining to be made subject to all relevant environmental legislation, including the native vegetation and water management laws.
- 11) A prohibition on coal seam gas exploration and mining in important bushland, valuable farmland, on groundwater aquifers, residential areas and public lands.
- 12) a full investigation into the full life cycle of coal seam gas including mining exploration and extraction processes, fugitive emissions, processing and transportation costs.

We are concerned about coal seam gas mining because:

Whether it uses fracking or not, the CSG and natural gas drilling processes still puncture pressurised rocks between aquifers and release hazardous chemicals and methane into the water and atmosphere.

Large quantities of water are required for this process and mining companies are exempt from the water allocations specified in the Great Artesian Basin (GAB) Resource Operations Plan. Groundwater experts state that there is already up to 20% over-allocation of water from the GAB, and the CSG industry may require an additional 350,000ML/yr.

Unsustainable water use from aquifer systems that are already decreasing in resilience due to an increasingly erratic climate and multiple stakeholder use, as well as the danger of underground subsidence as a result of pressure changes as due to water extraction.

Issues with the processed water include high salinity, leaking holding ponds and the likelihood of pollution of our air from evaporated chemicals and contamination of our surface and sub-surface water systems.

Leaking well heads as methane is between 72 & 208 times more powerful than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas (over 20yrs), as well as methane leaking into natural environments.

The full range and health implications of the chemicals used and released by the gas mining process are little known and need to be fully investigated. These can leak easily into a 5-10km radius of the well and will continue to seep through the inter-connected water system.

The CSG industry favours the term 'adaptive management' which they are interpreting to mean they will clean up any mess that they make, but that does not work for aquifers that take up to hundreds of years for water (or chemicals) to flow through. They need to take a precautionary, not reactionary approach to their environmental impacts.

Australians are becoming dependent on mining jobs at a time that we desperately need to be focusing and investing in long-term, sustainable energy solutions and food production, not wasting time and resources on 'transition fuels' that benefit the few. Please help us to bring communities closer together and build a better Australia for our childrens future.

Kind regards,

Hanabeth Luke

BSANE