

**Submission
No 695**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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The first issue I would like to raise regarding this most monumental pending environmental disaster this country has ever faced, is the fact that, over 50% of the population is not represented on your committee. There are no women there, no mothers. This is an oversight that could be addressed so as the most basic division in the population is represented. Who is it that has the fierce prime urge to defend and protect the rights and opportunities of our children and children's futures if it's not the mothers? Obviously I'm one!

I am writing from the perspective of a community member from the Northern Rivers of NSW, the Clarence Moreton Basin. I am making this submission on behalf of my family and local community to address our extreme concerns regarding the present and planned Coal Seam Gas mining activities in, firstly our area, and the Australian continent. We see this activity as the single biggest threat to the well being of our children's future and the sustainability of this beautiful country we inhabit.

Our introduction into coal seam gas mining came when one of the local residents was nearly run off the road by a truck carrying drilling rig. We started asking questions and contacting the contractors to find out what was happening. In April 2010 Arrow Energy paid our neighbour to consent to test drilling on his property. No community consultation was undertaken we had to initiate it all then eventually they held an information session at the local town where our questions were apparently answered. We were told they were very sorry for not letting us know and they would be in contact regarding the results of the test drill in a few months time. No one has been contacted since. I have written a letter requesting answers but yet to receive a reply. We had a follow up meeting arranged by a local member, Aug 2011, but unfortunately the relevant Arrow employee was sick that day and therefore they still could give us no results or feedback as to whether or not they plan to come back. Why is my future in the hands of an offshore company, Shell Petro China, and they have more rights to this valley in which we live than we do?

We have since come to realise that this is the manner in which the coal seam gas industry has been unknowingly imposed on the population, by stealth, but this is no longer the case thanks to many committed passionate people who have campaigned hard to get the real story out into the public arena and get the politicians to listen.

Just recently we have found out that despite all this 'tough new rules' inquiry, moratorium talk. Arrow is business as usual offering farmer's money to secure their cooperation in further test drills, even closer to town. It has to be stopped we have to be able to have a say in our future

Is there the political will to look after the planet and the people or profits for the companies?

That General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 inquire into and report on the environmental, economic and social impacts of coal seam gas (CSG) activities, including exploration and commercial extraction activities, allowable under the NSW Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991 (the Act), and in particular:

1. The environmental and health impact of CSG activities including the:

a. Effect on ground and surface water systems,

There are plans by Metgasco to place a 12 hectare holding pond near Casino, whilst I realize that these ponds are now banned for new licences but they have the green light to continue for current licences despite new awareness of the dangers. They also have a DA 2012. 0021 in at Richmond Valley Council NOW for an extension to its established holding ponds at the Piora quarry. How is this OK. If holding ponds are banned what's the safe alternative? How can this water be disposed of? Spray it on the roads as Arrow was caught and fined for doing in QLD

b. Effects related to the use of chemicals

We don't know what they will be till later down the track, See National Toxic Network-

c. Effects related to hydraulic fracturing, <http://ntn.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/NTN-Fracking-Briefing-Paper-2011.pdf>

d. Effect on Crown Lands including travelling stock routes and State forests,

e. Nature and effectiveness of remediation required under the Act,

f. Effect on greenhouse gas and other emissions,

g. Relative air quality and environmental impacts compared to alternative fossil fuels.

<http://ntn.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Toxic-Air-Pollution-from-Natural-Gas-Development.pdf>

Why is it we have to focus on fossil fuels and not renewable

<http://beyondzeroemissions.org/>

<http://www.100percent.org.au>

2. The economic and social implications of CSG activities including those which affect:

a. Legal rights of property owners and property values,

If mining in our valley was to be imposed on us, we would face the harsh reality that others have faced which is not wanting to live here any longer but not being able to sell. I won't have our children exposed to the pollution, noise etc but would we be able to sell? Our land value will be such that we would have to walk away and start again? If the mining is not happening on our property then there would be any chance of compensation?

If they were to arrive back here ready to continue exploration I and others will be ready to commence direct action to stop their activities. We have nothing to gain and everything to lose.

b. Food security and agricultural activity, Our future is in localisation of our food sources and if great areas of Australia's water supply is unusable what will happen?

c. Regional development, investment and employment, and State competitiveness,

d. Royalties payable to the State, There's a 5 year honeymoon isn't there

e. Local Government including provision of local/regional infrastructure and local planning control mechanisms.

3. The role of CSG in meeting the future energy needs of NSW including the:

RENEWABLES PLEASE- maybe there is a case for types of gas extraction if it can be proved to be safe for local use but this gas rush is focussed on getting it offshore.

a. Nature and extent of CSG demand and supply,

b. Relative whole-of-lifecycle emission intensity of CSG versus other energy sources,

c. Dependence of industry on CSG for non-energy needs (eg. chemical manufacture),

- d. Installed and availability costs of CSG versus other stationary energy sources,
 - e. Proportion of NSW energy needs which should be base load or peaking supply and the extent to which CSG is needed for that purpose,
 - f. Contribution of CSG to energy security and as a transport fuel.
4. The interaction of the Act with other legislation and regulations, including the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991.
5. The impact similar industries have had in other jurisdictions.

This is the Chinchilla gas fields QLD, an appalling example of how profit driven madness has overridden our duty to be caretakers of this land and our future generations. How can you imagine this to be 'rehabilitated' when the gas is exhausted, it can only be a toxic wasteland.



Image courtesy of Stop Coal Seam Gas Mining

Thanks for your time

Sonya Gibbons