

**Submission
No 375**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

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The Director

General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5

Parliament House, Macquarie St. Sydney NSW 2000

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS.

We consider global warming the greatest threat to our natural environment and to the social and economic well-being of human communities. We are greatly concerned that the coal industry continues to expand under policies pursued by State and Federal Governments. We are especially alarmed at the current frenzy of coal seam gas exploration, and the huge projected level of mining for coal seam gas (CSG).

A major concern is that CSG mining has been shown to constitute a significant threat to water resources. CSG appears likely to massively affect our already-depleted Great Artesian Basin over time, through drawdown and contamination of aquifers. CSG will require large amounts of water within the already over-allocated Murray-Darling Basin. Surface water systems will be polluted as a result of the release of large quantities of waste water from leakages and discharges. Huge quantities of salt released into the environment will cause very significant degradation. Many wells are located, and more are projected to be located, on floodplains and in water catchment areas of great sensitivity. Wetland areas are also threatened.

CSG mining has already very significantly impacted large areas of native vegetation, and projected expansion poses the alarming prospect of massive clearing and fragmentation, within what are mostly already over-cleared and degraded landscapes. This has serious consequences for wildlife habitat and linkages between remnants, including key corridor areas.

Even protected areas and public lands are threatened – CSG mining can occur in areas bordering National Parks, and is permitted in State Conservation Areas and State Forests.

For example, Pilliga CSG mining will clear at least 2,400 hectares and fragment 85,000 hectares of public lands, including State Forests and State Conservation Areas; at Putty drilling is planned next to the World Heritage-listed Wollemi National Park; at Pogy, drilling is occurring on an inholding in Goulburn River National Park; in north-west NSW, Travelling Stock Routes are targeted for drilling and gas pipeline infrastructure; in the north-east, a pipeline is proposed through the World Heritage-listed Border Ranges National Park.

CSG mining also represents a serious risk to human health, due to potential contamination of water used for human consumption and agricultural production with chemicals used in drilling or fracking, as well as those present in the coal seam. Leakage of toxic methane and other gases during gas production, migration of methane into water supplies, poor management of chemicals and use of toxic chemicals without full disclosure, particularly during fracking and drilling, are further threats to health.

CSG mining has further numerous massive impacts on landholders and communities. With declining water quantity and quality, arable land is lost, productivity and property values are reduced. Infrastructure is damaged...

Consequently alarm and opposition to this industry is widespread 'across the board' in the community. The projected expansion of coal seam gas mining cannot be tolerated.

Coal seam gas (CSG) is a fossil fuel and a significant source of greenhouse gas pollution. It generates more than 40 times the amount of greenhouse gas per unit of energy generated by solar or wind. Coal seam gas will make a major contribution to global warming, particularly when fugitive emissions and liquefaction prior to export are fully considered.

We share the alarm expressed by the environment movement, landholders and the community generally. We are calling for:

- 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 Coal seam gas exploration and mining to be made subject to all relevant environmental legislation, including the native vegetation and water management laws.
- 3 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.
- 4 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.
- 5 A prohibition on coal seam gas exploration and mining in important bushland, valuable farmland, groundwater aquifers, residential areas and public lands.
- 6 A requirement that all chemicals used in coal seam gas drilling or fracking must be assessed by the chemical regulator for use for that purpose before being approved for use.

Yours sincerely
Barrie Griffiths.