

Submission
No 392

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Mr Robert Barry

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I am concerned about the effect that coal seam gas mining may have on the productivity of the Liverpool Plains.

The Liverpool Plains represents about 1.5% of the area of NSW and is arguably Australia's most productive dryland farming country.

BGI and Queensland Gas were given approval at the end of 2010 to establish a commercial gas field in the Surat Basin in Queensland with an average well concentration of 1 well every 4.44 hectares.

Can you imagine a 500 hectare farming paddock on the Liverpool Plains with over 100 gas wells all connected by all-weather access roads, gas pipes and water pipes. This would be the end of broad acre farming on the Liverpool Plains.

Santos has the exploration rights over the whole of the Liverpool Plains. I have met with the Chairman of Santos and the Chief Executive of Santos has visited our property on the edge of the Liverpool Plains.

Santos believes new technology of horizontal drilling will reduce the number of wells. Nevertheless, all-weather access roads, water and gas pipes connecting wells across the fragile black alluvial soils of the flood plains will have a devastating effect.

I am still waiting on an undertaking of the Chairman of Santos, given earlier this year, that Santos will provide a detailed paper explaining why the productivity of the Liverpool Plains will not be affected by coal seam gas mining.

These concerns that I have expressed are in addition to the effect coal seam gas mining will have on the water table. Vast quantities of saline water will need to be pumped out of the aquifers to release the gas. Saline water, if applied on the farming paddocks, would render the soil infertile. Whilst the saline water may be subject to a desalination process, the interconnectivity of the aquifers on the Plains is not totally understood.

Given the strategic importance of the Liverpool Plains to Australia's long term food security, coal seam gas mining should be excluded from the Liverpool Plains.