

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

**Submission to the NSW State Parliament re Coal Seam Gas mining
6 September 2011**

This submission is written in support of the concerns of the Lock the Gate Alliance regarding impacts of coal seam gas mining on the environment, agriculture, and communities. I urge the NSW Government to ensure that this industry not be increased, and that the existing level of the industry be made subject to all relevant environmental legislation, including the native vegetation and water management laws.

Further I request that:

- The community has full legal rights to challenge and enforce environmental laws under which coal seam gas companies are operating.
- The provision of a right in the Petroleum (Onshore) Act allows landholders to refuse consent for coal seam gas exploration or production on their land.
- Coal seam gas exploration and mining be prohibited in important bushland, valuable farmland, groundwater aquifers, residential areas and public lands.
- All chemicals used in coal seam gas drilling or fracking be assessed by the chemical regulator for use for that purpose before being approved for use.

I support the Lock the Gate Alliance's call for a full moratorium on the existing CSG industry and ask that all forms of coal seam gas exploration and extraction cease until the environmental, social and health impacts have been rigorously and independently assessed.

I further believe that NO further exploration licences or licences to extract CSG should occur at all because:

- I hold grave concerns for the possible environmental damage to underground water aquifers as a result of current extraction techniques.
- I am concerned about contamination of surface waterways through leaking, leaching, and overflow of surface wastewater dams.
- I am concerned about the myth that CSG is a safe transitional energy source between coal and renewables due to the enormous environmental cost of producing and distributing the gas, and the loss of methane to the atmosphere in the process.

Of paramount concern is the degradation of native habitat through clearing and fragmentation of bushland. I am a trained Ornithologist, acutely aware of the decline in Australia's birds and other wildlife due primarily to loss and fragmentation of habitat. Clearing native vegetation for CSG wells and associated equipment, roads, and pipelines isolates populations. While some species can cope with the changes, many others cannot survive the reduced availability of vital resources. It is completely wrong to assume that the wildlife will move somewhere else. Most of it dies. Those remaining in isolated populations

face problems of dispersal and the impacts of limited immigration. Australia already faces an enormous, and as yet little understood, extinction debt. That is, the impacts of reduced and fragmented habitat and the introduction of feral competitors and diseases have not reached their climax across Australia, but we do know that the more vulnerable species are in serious decline, while others are already extinct. To rush ahead developing an industry that will inevitably dramatically further reduce and fragment habitat for short-term human gain is the height of folly. This concern extends to all native bushland, including degraded bushland and that within agricultural landscapes. My concern extends beyond listed threatened species, which receive such attention because they invoke the greatest sense of guilt. All native species are impacted on by our destructive actions, and a common species today may be a threatened one tomorrow if their habitat is degraded.

I therefore fully support and endorse the efforts of the primary organisations concerned with bird conservation in Australia to inform the government of the impact of coal seam gas mining in the Pilliga Forest, namely Birds Australia and Bird Observation and Conservation Australia.

My concern also extends to the amenity of a landscape dotted with wells and industrial sites and sliced up with roads. I live in the beautiful Northern Rivers of NSW and will be devastated if this landscape is destroyed by a CSG industry, not wanted by the people who live here. The visual impact would be horrendous, the noise level totally unacceptable when all I hear now are the sounds of nature, and the irreversible change from a green oasis to an industrial zone would be a nightmare come true.

Yours respectfully