

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

"NO" TO COAL SEAM GAS

Landholders, fisheries groups and the general community are being treated with absolute contempt by a Coal Seam Gas (CSG) Industry intent on forging ahead with their business without proper risk evaluation or consultation.

According to mining magnate Clive Palmer, the industry uses unproven technology and could cause a devastating environmental impact.

There is no evidence yet to prove CSG mining is not harmful to aquifers and waterways but there is evidence overseas and in Queensland it can be extremely and permanently damaging. In the US especially there is evidence it has resulted in the industrialization of wilderness and agricultural areas, creating toxic waterways and chronic air pollution. In Queensland, cancer causing chemicals continue to be detected in water bores. Bush-land and farm-land areas carry gas wells and massive networks of pipelines.

A representative of the Australian Petroleum Exploration Association (APEA) recently stated on ABC Mid North Coast Radio that (with respect to the reported presence of representatives from Pangea energy company around Bulahdelah) enough research has been done to push forward with more Coal Seam Gas extraction. The problem is, while he acknowledged he is not familiar with the geology and geomorphology of this region, he implies that work done elsewhere to determine safety standards is good enough to apply to the Mid North Coast. While suggesting that if we tried to be too thorough with our safety standards "we would still be living in caves with stones", he asked the question, "What standards are expected by the community?" (before we expand current coal seam gas exploitation).

My answer to that is we need the best standards we can develop.

When asked what guarantees the Coal Seam Gas Industry could give that the environmental effect would be neutral, the representative said that "Generally, Coal Seam Gas wells go deeper than aquifers from where people take water". Note that this response was given in general terms. What I say must happen is that any proposal must be addressed in terms of the specifications for that region depending on the geology, geomorphology AND the possible impacts on the local environment AND on existing community and businesses . A risk assessment must be done for the particular region where

CSG is proposed depending on all the local factors. How can we hope to evaluate a risk versus benefit analysis if we are forced to use a model produced for a "one size fits all" approach? To apply a generalised model across various regions would be hugely irresponsible.

So, with a lack of meaningful data, the CSG industry expects landholders, fishers and all concerned about the cleanliness of our water and environment to simply trust what they say about safety when all we have seen is evidence that CSG can be disturbingly unsafe and astoundingly damaging to the environment.

The CSG industry has been trying to play down the negatives about chemicals used in their activities by saying they don't use them here or there. But these cancer causing chemicals naturally occur in the geology they bore into so whether CSG miners inject chemicals into the well or not, they can still be released into the environment. Every type of mining carries some risk of accident and in CSG mining, one concern is well blow-outs where the liquid under high pressure blows back out of the well, dispersing toxic chemicals in an uncontrolled manner. Another is that prediction of which underground rock strata will break is not reliable so toxic water can travel underground and emerge elsewhere, destination also unknown. There are too many unknown factors in CSG extraction and no realistic guarantees of safety can be put forward by the industry.

The Mid North Coast (and all of Australia) are too precious to take such a monumental gamble with coal seam gas extraction. It only takes one mistake to release uncontrolled and unmonitored toxic material into our water system and irreversible damage may be done.

Mining magnate Clive Palmer has been forthright with his recent comments at the National Party's Federal Council in Canberra saying, "Coal seam gas technology currently used in Australia is lethal and will kill Australians, poison our water and destroy the land".