

**Submission
No 556**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Organisation: Edge Land Planning

Date received: 7/09/2011



The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

7 September 2011

Dear Sir / Madam,

Legislative Council General Purposes Standing Committee No. 5. Inquiry into Coal Seam Gas

I am a rural planning consultant specialising in strategic planning for rural land. I have worked for more than 25 years in rural planning – both development assessment and strategic planning in more than 30 Councils in rural NSW and Queensland in various landscapes ranging from coastal and metropolitan fringe to winery areas to highly productive cropping and grazing lands to marginal areas in the far west. This work has involved investigating and developing policy for rural land as well as the townships and larger regional centres. Tourism and economic development as well as the necessary infrastructure have been key issues in all of these areas as has biodiversity, natural hazards, landscape, heritage, culture and catchment planning issues.

I have specialised in the preservation of agricultural land and have developed an interest in food security as an extension of that work. In addition to my work in NSW and Queensland I have investigated rural planning issues all around Australia and New Zealand as well as in the USA, Canada and England. My role as a part-time lecturer at the University of NSW Faculty of the Built Environment since 1998 (where I have taught a number of subjects dealing with rural planning and strategic planning) has also allowed me to look at rural areas and the preparation of strategies in a holistic manner, from an objective and academic perspective.

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I have also been accepted by the University of Sydney to do a PhD looking into food security and the planning issues surrounding the supply of the land that is needed to grow that food.

This submission has been prepared from the perspective of a land use planner who has vast experience in all facets of the food production system as well as land use planning and the related issues.

Contested Landscapes

Different parts of NSW grow different types of food. Commodities such as perishable vegetables and some poultry are predominantly grown on the Sydney Metropolitan fringe and some coastal areas. Analysis of the ABS Agricultural Census has shown that the Sydney Region produces 63.6% of the perishable vegetables grown in NSW as well as producing significant amounts of poultry, nurseries, flowers and turf.

Extensive cropping for wheat, barley, sorghum, etc. and grazing of cattle and sheep as well as lot feeding of cattle, pigs, poultry and sheep are carried out predominantly in the inland parts of the country.

The land that is needed to grow this food is being eroded by a number of pressures for change in the land use to other types of development. This includes urbanisation and rural residential development as well as mining and gas extraction in the Metropolitan fringe and coastal areas, as well as mining and gas extraction in the inland areas, particularly amongst the important cropping lands extending from the Liverpool Plains to the Queensland border.

The climate change scenarios of more variability of the climate means that more of the land in NSW is likely to be unproductive. This has the potential to place more pressure on the good cropping land to grow the food needed to feed the nation in the years to come.

Coal Seam Gas Impact

Coal seam gas exploration licenses have been issued over the coastal and inland parts of the State. These areas are also significant producers of food.

The cropping lands in particular are being contested. Coal seam gas extraction also has the potential to interfere with future cropping. Whilst it is acknowledged that the gas well might not take up much land, the piping required to transport the gas from the well to the collection point does have the potential to interfere. It will take some land out of production because of the potential for the heavy machinery used in farming to interfere with the integrity of the pipe network.

There is also the impact of the water that comes out with the gas and the need to ensure that this is properly contained. This can have an impact on the cropping lands as well as the land that is used for grazing of cattle and sheep.

Strategic Planning is needed

The land is being used to produce food and this land is being eroded and if there is not some action taken soon, there will be a shortage of land and we may have to rely on more imports of food than we currently do. It could be the 'death of 1,000 cuts' and may creep up on us if we do not act now and carry out some investigations into the needs of the food production and treat it as a constraint to the development of coal seam gas extraction.

There is a need to identify the land that is needed for food production and quarantine it from gas exploration and extraction. This would include the vast areas of cropping land in the state as well as some of the horticulture lands around Sydney. I believe that if we do this, we can identify the best land for food production as well as land for gas exploration and extraction. There is a need to address both the mining and planning legislation because the exploration impact can be just as great or even greater than the actual extraction.

I would be happy to address the Inquiry on these issues and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours Faithfully

Ian Sinclair FPIA
Principal Consultant