

Submission  
No 775

## INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

General Purpose Standing Committee No.5

To whom it may concern,

I would like to make a submission to Standing Committee in relation to Coal Seam Gas mining.

I would like to start by stating my opposition to the expansion of this industry in NSW and Australia without appropriate environmental and social assessment. I strongly believe that appropriate assessment of the impacts of this industry need to be investigated and addressed prior to any future coal seam gas.

I am a property owner and am just about to embark on the establishment of an organic farm on the north coast of NSW. The experiences that I have heard of in Qld and internationally in relation to farmers rights and mining rights, environmental, social and health issues alarms me and creates great uncertainty for me and my family. I ask that in your deliberations you consider the matters I have raised below.

- Australia is currently leading the per capita greenhouse gas emissions of any OECD country and our emissions are among the highest in the world. When we should be reducing our green house gas emissions we are allowing an industry that will significantly increase emissions proliferate. The export of Australian resources including gas overseas does not negate the impacts our nation has on green house gas emissions. Furthermore, leaking gas from coal seam gas mining may further significantly contribute to our emissions as a nation. Australia should be investing in renewable, sustainable energy production as a priority, not allowing green house gas producing industries to proliferate and then deal with the consequences at a later date. The consequences not only include impacts on the Australian people and environment, but have global implications with many of our Pacific neighbours at risk from sea level rise and some already having to leave their homes as a consequence. Australia is a rich nation with great opportunity and we as individuals and a nation need to appreciate how fortunate we are take responsibility for our actions and plan our future wisely.
- Coal seam gas mining has the potential to alienate much agricultural land. Agricultural land is already at risk from climate change and urban development. The price of food is increasing and quality food is becoming less affordable. Agricultural land needs to be protected from any activity that could reduce its productive potential. A comprehensive assessment of all agricultural lands, not just prime agricultural land, and Australia's future food requirements needs to be finalised and lands protected, prior allowing any activity that could potentially damage its productive potential. Based on this assessment, important and strategic areas of agricultural lands should be off limits to mining or associated activities that would impact on the viability of that land or agricultural business. For any land where coal seam gas mining is allowed a rehabilitation strategy needs to be prepared and funds quarantined to implement this strategy at the end of the mines life.
- Coal seam gas mining and associated infrastructure including access infrastructure should be subject to appropriate environmental assessment. It is not a routine agricultural management activity and as such should be subject to stringent requirements when being undertaken on rural zoned lands and particularly lands zoned for environmental protection purposes.

- Any assessment of coal seam gas mining should include comprehensive assessment of cumulative and off site social and environmental impacts.
- A rehabilitation plan for each well should be prepared prior to operation and a bond to cover the cost of this held.
- Individual land holders and the broader community should have the final say regarding whether coal seam gas mining is allowed in an area. There are potential off site implications of this industry including impacts on amenity, water table levels and ground water quality, business viability and so on. There should be a strategic planning process in the mining/planning legislation, with clear criteria and outcomes, together with guaranteed rights of community involvement and review. If there is obvious opposition from a community to coal seam gas mining in an area then there needs to be a mechanism, perhaps through local government, where the community has the final say.
- All individual land owners should have the right to refuse coal seam gas mining on their property.
- A regulatory body that deals with complaints from landholders who are being bullied by mining companies to allow access to their land needs to be established.
- If land owners elect to have mining on their property there should be a clear and transparent compensation regime for mine-affected landowners that recognise underground and broader impacts, includes compensation for loss of amenity, loss of opportunity or profits or decreased market value. Individual land owners should not have to negotiate a compensation agreement in isolation.
- If a mining company acquires the land, any valuation needs to compensate landowners for the true cost of resuming the same activities elsewhere. Furthermore, if the purchase of the land and subsequent mining activity will impact on adjoining landowners, then adequate compensation for those impacts needs to be paid, and if the impacts will result in loss of productivity on adjoining lands or the land can no longer be used as is currently is then the operation of a gas well should not be allowed.
- A robust, resourced and independent monitoring and compliance sector needs to be established to monitor activities in relation to mining in NSW. Annual audits of the industry should be undertaken by the NSW Auditor-General and/or NSW Ombudsman, with the results made public.
- The NSW Planning Minister should have legislated powers to suspend or revoke mining approvals for breaches of conditions.
- A process for landowners to apply to revoke their consent to land access if mining operations breach conditions is also needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to raise the issues above.

Kind Regards