

Submission
No 499

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Mrs Heather Marrtin

Date received: 7/09/2011

Coal seam gas (Inquiry)

General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5. -report on the environmental, health, economic and social impacts of coal seam gas activities.

Dear Sir/Madam, We wish to submit the following matters for consideration and to express our concern over the proposed Eastern Star Gas pipeline from Narrabri to Wellington and the proposals to exponentially increase the extraction of Coal Seam Gas[CSG].

The first matter relates to the unprofessional and apparent non-compliant approach by Eastern Star Gas contractor CNC PROJECT MANAGEMENT. Their facilitator arrived without notice on our farm at 8.10 am on Saturday 10th of July 2010 and opened by saying "Good news – I am not from the coal mines". The facilitator then proceeded to tell us that he just needed a moment of our time and a couple of things signed. He was informed that it would be at least 6 weeks before we could meet with him due to leave issues and our need to seek advice. He was most insistent that we meet promptly which we did on 14th of July. Again the ESG contractor was insistent that we sign access documents and on refusal, reluctantly recorded our questions to which we still await answers. It seems a very poor process compounded by the absence of any courtesy preliminary phone call or public notice in our local paper regarding the proposal. Secondly, we would like to bring to your attention some aspects of the proposal which affect our lands and other landholders along the designated route.

The nature of lands along much of the proposed route is floodplains of less than 2% slope, dissected by creeks and flood channels. The soils are mainly vertosols, reactive black earths with high clay contents and very high erodibility. The subject soils are Land Capability Class II and Land Suitability Class I. The subject lands are principally used for arable food and fibre crop production and the proposed pipeline route threatens existing investment in water licences and irrigation, controlled traffic farming including GPS controlled equipment and farm works layout, to mention a few of the actual costs, risks and inconveniences to our farm business and lifestyle.

It is obvious that the proponents have not had applied to them the laws and principles that existing landholders are bound by, such as the Namoi CMA Catchment Action Plan [statutory plan approved by the Minister in 2007], its BMP's, and the Upper Cox's Creek Floodplain Management Plan, gazetted in 2005 under Part 8 of the Water Act 1912.

Additionally there are many published works relating to the morphology, fragility and degradation threats on this floodplain and its riverine environment that would amply inform the applicant of the unmanageable risk and lack of merit relating to any pipeline route through this valley. The construction of such apparatus, and ongoing ground easement access would be prime examples of significant and predictable threats to this environment, as experienced by the ESG fauna and flora survey contractors during their work in Spring 2010.

In summary the BMP's for these black-soil floodplains proscribes conservation; sustainability; efficiency of farming; precision agriculture; improvement of soil structure, fertility and biology; spreading flood flows; prevention of soil erosion; management of pest plants and animals; planning; and land uses being socially acceptable.

The historically unmanageable risks of CSG extraction including the patent inability to remediate damage to underground and surface water resources [e.g. springs] indicates that the proposed actions are inappropriate activity in this region, a key biodiversity and foodland of this nation for hundreds of generations to come.

We request that any gas transmission infrastructure required in this region follow established public transport corridors that are already used for these purposes e.g. Newell Highway, Rail easements.

Heather Martin

6/9/2011