

Submission
No 71

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

It is essential to have a full moratorium on all forms of coal seam gas drilling until all environmental, social and health impacts have been rigorously and independently assessed. Moreover, there must be a requirement that all chemicals used in coal seam gas drilling or 'fracking' be assessed by the chemical regulator, not just independently, but also in the conjunctive forms that will be used by each company, and also assessed in the quantities that will be used, before being approved for use.

A specific independent governing body should be set up to regulate all aspects of the coal seam gas industry, and coal seam gas exploration and mining should be made subject to all relevant environmental legislation, including the native vegetation and water management laws. There also needs to be specific legislation brought in to govern the coal seam gas industry, its practices, workers and management, with penalties being able to be imposed on an individual level (rather than a corporation level), to ensure that industry regulations are being carried out.

There needs to be a full assessment of the viability of waste management as a result of the coal seam gas extraction. Reverse osmosis water treatment has already been shown to be completely insufficient to remove proven harmful chemicals from the resultant waste water, evaporation ponds leach these same chemicals into the air, and using waste water for tree irrigation is also unviable - leading to the poisoning of aquifers through their naturally osmotic nature of water intake. The second issue of the mega-tons of salt that are produced as a result of coal seam gas drilling is also a major concern, and needs a sustainable and environmentally cogent solution.

There needs to be a provision of standing to ensure that the community has full legal rights to challenge and enforce environmental laws under which coal seam gas companies are operating; and the provision of a right in the Petroleum (Onshore) Act to allow landholders to refuse consent for coal seam gas exploration or production on their land.

Finally there should be a prohibition on coal seam gas exploration and mining in important bushland, valuable farmland, groundwater aquifers, residential areas and public lands.