

**Submission
No 818**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

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Submission to NSW Upper House Inquiry into Coal Seam Gas

I wish to make a submission to the Coal Seam Gas Inquiry, and to make the following points:

1. The proposal to drill 1100 gas wells (and possibly more) in the Pilliga East State Forest (part of the Pilliga Forest) would turn that part of the forest into a maze of roads, unregulated dams, well heads etc with terrible effects on the biodiversity and forest production qualities of the area. How can Forestry continue to operate if the area is turned effectively into an industrial site? The proposed roads would bring in weeds and feral animals and have devastating effects on that part of the Forest. We understand that State Forests are not allowed to comment on the proposal – what a travesty of justice! Here they are required to play a role in the degradation of the area, with no redress and no compensation.
2. For all this degradation, we understand that the State of NSW is getting NOT ONE CENT in royalties for the first 5 (FIVE!) years of the life of a well; many do not have a longer life; so the people of NSW get NOTHING for the destruction of their land and water. The question: WHY?????
3. Ordinary people in my town (Coonabarabran) are violently opposed to this proposal. This includes people never known to be “greenies” – they just say – “I don’t like the proposal either”. They know that we can’t tolerate the loss of agricultural and bushland on the scale proposed and considered by the proponents. This is NOT a small operation – it would eventually be HUGE!!!! And there would most likely be an electoral backlash against a government or party that permitted it.
4. Pollution of water: any proposal to drill through an aquifer is fraught with danger. To think that this company could drill safely (!!!!) through aquifers that are part of the Great Artesian Basin is sheer madness. I have also the considered opinion of a mining geologist on this question – even some in other industries are appalled at the proposal.
5. Pollution of water (continued): where will all the water to run the wells come from? From boreholes, I presume – we are talking again about the Great Artesian Basin, and some shallower aquifers. We know that, under Climate Change, everyone will

have to share the burden of reduced water supply – how can this company use the proposed huge amounts of water needed for their operations with such impunity? I can tell you that local farmers and irrigators are not impressed!

6. Destruction of agricultural land: if wells are drilled on agricultural land, we are all the losers – despite the fact that possibly not one cent is paid into State coffers. Agricultural land is land we use to produce our food. It's not a hypothetical concept; we need agricultural land, of high quality and of lesser quality as well.
7. Destruction of biodiversity: we are all aware of the losses of biodiversity occurring in many places in our State and elsewhere. Plants and animals do not thrive in industrial landscapes, such as would be created by the proposal. It's not rocket science. Some animals won't even cross a road! So if we turn our forest or farmland into one big gas field (like Tara, Queensland), we won't have any places left for biodiversity either.
8. Endangered Species: The Pilliga Forest is home to a number of threatened species, such as the Pilliga Mouse, Regent Honeyeater (Critically Endangered), Bush Stone-curlew and Swift Parrot (Endangered), Glossy Black-Cockatoo, Barking Owl, Little Lorikeet, Turquoise Parrot, Brown Treecreeper, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Gilbert's Whistler, Speckled Warbler, Grey-crowned Babbler and Hooded Robin (Vulnerable). The future for these creatures is bleak under a coal seam gas scenario.
9. Jobs? Not likely! – we know that big companies exploiting resources use workers flown in and out of the area for work. Where do the workers come from? Certainly they aren't locals to the area. The workforce doesn't shop locally because everything is provided for them in their specially constructed villages.
10. The irrational and insane proposals to extract every last molecule of fossil fuel from our land (here, a very damaging greenhouse gas, namely methane; elsewhere, coal) flies in the face of every logical proposal to cut greenhouse gas emissions and move to renewable energy sources proposed by State and Federal Governments.

I do have one last general comment: in the past, we have had mining and extraction operations which, while they might have destroyed relatively small areas of land, were nevertheless considered to be necessary to support our way of life. The coal seam gas proposals, if approved, would destroy vast areas of land and are not needed to support our way of life – 90% of the Pilliga coal seam gas would be exported.

I urge Inquiry members to take very seriously the considerations outlined above, and to stop the coal seam gas industry before it destroys our water and our land.

Yours sincerely
(Dr) Helen Stevens