

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

I make this submission as the second generation of a beef cattle producing property in northern NSW. I am motivated to participate because of my extreme concern about the harmful impacts resulting from Coal Seam Gas (CSG) mining.

1. I feel shocked by what the environmental and health impacts of CSG activities are. Generally, I have learned about what impacts have occurred in other areas, firstly close to my home area (in south east Queensland); and secondly by what has occurred in other countries such as the USA and France – where a complete ban against CSG mining has now been legislated. Given the experiences of other countries, it does not seem unreasonable to ask for a prohibition on CSG exploration and mining in important bushland, valuable farmland, groundwater aquifers, residential areas and public lands. In specific terms, I have personally witnessed CSG well-heads leaking methane gas in my home area around the town of Casino NSW. I am certain that CSG mining will continue to cause unregulated damage to the environment, and unknowable harm to human health. I therefore ask for a full and immediate moratorium on all forms of CSG drilling until the environmental, social and health impacts have been rigorously and independently assessed.

2. I feel distressed by the economic and social implications of CSG activities in my area. In my home town of Casino, NSW, I have been personally abused on a number of occasions because of my pessimistic views about CSG – that is the normal reality of living in a CSG affected town. This verbal abuse typically comes from the families of people employed by the CSG mining company; consequently people are forced into the polarization of what were once congenial human relationships. While social impacts of industrial activities are difficult to regulate, I must however insist on a provision of standing to ensure that the community has full legal rights to challenge and enforce environmental laws under which CSG companies are operating. This at least might give our communities some strength in the face of socially disruptive CSG activities.

3. I feel ashamed by what is advertised as the role of CSG in meeting the future energy needs of NSW. In my life experience I know that any realistic future energy needs must be fundamentally based upon the principles of renewable energy. Many homes in my local area operate photovoltaic solar panels on their roof. This proves to me that NSW's future energy needs can, are and will be met by renewable resources. Given the federal government's leadership into a renewable future, with financial incentives for the renewable industry, it seems outrageous to me that CSG mining is given any credibility at all – CSG mining is not credible and is taking NSW backwards. My deep sense of shame comes from the suggestion that fossil fuels, especially CSG, need to have any place in NSW's future.

4. I feel offended by the interaction of the NSW Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991 (the Act), with other legislation including the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991. The interaction of the Act with other legislations and regulations generally appease to be very unbalanced in favour of the Act. The effects of the interactions are that CSG industry groups currently hold excessive influence, power and authority over NSW government and by definition therefore NSW people such as my family. The current government's lack of credibility manifests in the application of the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991. Therefore I call for CSG exploration and mining to be made subject to all relevant environmental legislation, including the native vegetation and water management laws. Furthermore, I specifically insist on the provision of a right in the NSW Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991 to allow landholders to refuse consent for CSG exploration or production on their land. It offends me deeply that CSG companies are currently supported in their use of the Act while NSW citizens such as my family, are NOT feeling supported in their access to legislative change.

5. From personal experience I can tell you that similar industries, such as the oil mining industry, have had a devastating impact on environments, economies and societies throughout the world. Oil spills and fires are often large public examples, while the oil-sands mining of northern Alberta, Canada provide a specific example of the extreme damage caused by these invasive, fossil fuel industries. In NSW, as a minimum, this submission demands a requirement that all chemicals used in CSG drilling or fracking must be assessed by the chemical regulator for use before being approved for use.

Thank you for your time in considering this submission with the genuine intent that it was written. I entrust my descendants' future in you to imagine a NSW without CSG.

DJP