

**Submission
No 520**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

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SUBMISSION TO COAL SEAM GAS INQUIRY

Thank you for the opportunity to lodge a submission in relation to the coal seam gas industry and its impacts.

My wife and I have been travelling through rural and regional New South Wales over the last month conducting community meetings in relation to coal seam gas. We will be continuing this journey during September.

Attendances at these meetings have ranged between 30 to 300 people.

Some of the places we have held community meetings include Bellingen, Coffs Harbour, Taree, Gloucester, Sutton Forest, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Wentworth Falls, Springwood, Burren Junction, Coonamble, Coonabarabran and Mullaley.

The clear message from each and every one of those community meetings is that there should be a moratorium imposed on all aspects of the coal seam gas industry, including current exploration and production activities, until such time as there has been a full and independent assessment of the practices and impacts of the industry. This investigation and assessment should be undertaken by a Royal Commission or a body with the powers of a Royal Commission.

Concerns have been expressed at these meetings about the processes in awarding exploration licences and the behaviour of companies in seeking to undertake exploration activities.

There has been concern about the "uneven playing field" relating to the negotiation of access agreements to undertake drilling.

There have also been concerns raised that if the current state government provides the level of desired protection to private land then public land will be under threat from coal seam gas exploration and production.

The exemptions granted in the proposed Aquifer Interference Regulation, and the provisions of that regulation generally, have caused concerns. These concerns relate to the non-application of the regulation to current industry operations and the perception that the regulation simply codifies the breaches of the Water Management Act that have taken place in the past.

My own view, as a citizen and a voter in NSW, is that the precautionary principle should be applied. This requires that all coal seam gas exploration and production activities be put on hold until there is sufficient evidence, assessed by a truly independent body (not a parliamentary inquiry, subject to political pressures and processes), that the proposed industry activities do not pose a threat to water supply and quality, public and individual health, agricultural enterprises and the environmental needs of our sensitive wetlands and bushlands.

Michael McNamara

