

**Submission
No 186**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

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SUBMISSION TO GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE
No. 5 of N.S.W. LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON INQUIRY INTO
COAL SEAM GAS

1 Environmental and Health Impacts of CSG Activities

I have great concern, due to the lack of independent scientific studies, of the future health impacts of CSG on densely populated areas and the environmental impacts on our agricultural land. Exploration licenses have been granted in NSW in the past, without due regard or proper forethought to the effects on this country's food security and quality of life.

There seems to be a breakneck haste for this industry to take advantage of ill prepared governments in order to further their profits and possibly degrade the land they are operating on before exhausting these resources and moving on.

Greenhouse gases are also released (CO² and methane), during the extraction process and this needs to be weighed against the amount of this gas released via other energy sources.

Salt is another large byproduct of the mining process, hence the large tailing ponds we see wherever this industry is present. At some point in the future, this salt will have to be disposed of. The Federal Government has suggested sequestering it, however, once again, no independent reliable data exists on the effects on water tables of sequestering large amounts of salt in such concentrations. The fracturing process also injects a chemical cocktail (not fully disclosed) into the seams, with possible negative results with the release of benzene, toluene and xylene plus radioactive materials naturally existing inside the earth, many of which are carcinogens.

Witness the recently exposed problems of AGL by the media, where their wells in the Menangle area have been leaking sulphur dioxide for the last 3 years, despite the state authorities writing to them last year and telling AGL to fix the problem. It still goes on without remedy.

It is for the reasons above that I have great fear of CSG moving into the Campbelltown LGA, particularly the Scenic Hills, which have always provided a green zone buffer between developed areas in this district.

2. Economic and Social Implications

One needs only to look at the experiences of residents of the state of Pennsylvania in the U.S.A. and the state of Queensland here, Problems with contaminated water tables, leaking gas well heads near residential areas, loss of access to properties due to infrastructure such as roadways and truck traffic on mined areas.

What concerns me more is our food security in the future. We could possibly be destroying our arable land, via degradation of water tables or soil quality destruction through release of salt. We only have to look at the river Murray to see what rising salt tables can do to soil quality.

We need to be assured of being able to feed ourselves in the future without resort to importing most of our foodstuffs. China is buying up agricultural land in various countries, including this one, to assure their future food security, even though they themselves are sitting on one of the largest CSG deposits in the world in their far western provinces. They are not short sighted enough to mine this area when they realize, that they will need this arable land in the future to feed their growing population and guarantee the political stability (and political survival) of their regime.

How short sighted would we be if we were to condemn our future generations, my grandchildren and yours, to a country dependent on others to feed it, with the consequent social and economic instability this generates.

No amount of money will buy adequate food in a world where the food supply is in high demand due to overpopulation.

It's no good living in a rich society with abundant resources if the quality of its peoples' lives is poor and we can't afford to feed ourselves. Future demand for food and water resources will be enormous. For the driest continent in the world to deliberately destroy its water and food resources would be laughable to the rest of the world. **CSG COULD BE THE CATALYST FOR THIS.**

3. The role of CSG in Meeting Future Energy Needs of NSW

Gas has been piped from Moomba gas fields for many years. CSG mining will only be considered safe, if like Moomba, it is mined away from agricultural land and urban areas. This state should be looking at solar power and other renewable energy sources and talking to those countries that are successfully using these methods. A country with abundant sunshine should be exploiting this resource and not be looking to degrade its own land and peoples' lives.

The O'Farrell government was put into power by western Sydney. The Premier places such importance on western Sydney that he has created a new portfolio for himself, Minister for Western Sydney. It would be nice if the NSW State Government lived up to the lofty ideals they had when they were voted into power, of not taking the people for granted as did the last

government. The Minister for Western Sydney needs to listen to his constituents and reject any granting of licenses in the Campbelltown LGA, particularly the Scenic Hills, and any other areas affecting agriculture or urban communities. Queensland has rushed and made a terrible mistake as has Pennsylvania. France has banned the CSG process. We should stop all granting of mining licenses for however long it takes to independently (both independent from industry and government) prove if this industry is safe. We cannot gamble with Australia's and NSW's future generations. We would be treated with contempt by our own history.