

**Submission
No 191**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

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As a member of a family living and working on the Liverpool Plains I wish to make this submission.

There are a number of issues I'd like to raise:-

1. The Liverpool Plains are one of the most fertile agricultural areas in the world and has contributed hugely to the Australian economy over many generations while providing top quality food for all Australians. For this reason alone, this strategic prime agricultural food bowl should be protected.

The reliability and diversity of production on the Liverpool Plains is due largely to the unique rich self-mulching basalt soils, particularly the black alluvial plains, which, along with the quality aquifers allows for yields of 40% above the national average, enshrining this region as of strategic importance for our continued local and global food security.

Despite droughts and floods, the Liverpool Plains area is one of the only agricultural areas in NSW that has continued to provide food for our nation, plus export dollars for our economy, over the last decade.

Why on earth would any government seriously jeopardize this unique, highly productive agricultural area for coal and coal seam gas mining?

Along with an unprecedented increase in coal and coal seam gas exploration in NSW over the last 5 years, we have also had increases in urbanisation with its impacts on land once used for food production.

Add to this, global warming and climate change issues plus the ever increasing expanding global population growth predictions, one would think that the Government would be considering how to further protect this reliable food bowl.

With the recent floods in Queensland, food prices have escalated substantially and this has placed further pressures on family budgets and our export capabilities.

Add to this, recent catastrophes world wide such as earthquakes, tsunamis, nuclear contamination, terrorism and wars impacting on our food producing regions and food supplies, Governments worldwide need to isolate rich farming regions for FOOD only.

Surely these global incidents should alert our government to it's most important role, and that being to ensure it can provide safe, fresh affordable food for all.

2. Concern regarding the constant rhetoric that agriculture and mining/coal seam gas extraction can co-exist.

These industries can clearly only co-exist when these are situated in separate regions.

At present, coal seam gas is planned to be underneath the same prime agricultural land that grows our food and fattens our stock.

They clearly CANNOT co-exist without some impacts on farming and grazing.

3. The huge amounts of waste water and salt is another whole part of the debate which should raise very real concerns for the government.

The whole idea of reinjecting 'brine' (in other words, 'toxic') water back under the ground is flawed with potential problems and should be thoroughly ruled out.

We have already seen very real problems with this contaminated water issue in QLD.

What will be the coal seam gas industry's environmental longer term impacts - over a 20-30 year time frame?

Where will agriculture be in 30 years time if there are problems with this 'toxic' water affecting our ground and underground water systems?

4. One industry should never be given the OK to walk into a region and demand access from the legal landholders for any reason, especially one that is so flawed with potential environmental consequences.

The government should never have allowed any industry precedence over any other industry.

All industries should have been treated equally at the start.

This challenges our very faith in our democratic system!!

5. Farmers have made huge financial investments and decisions for the day to day operating of their business. To do so they need the assurance that they can utilise every hectare of their country; not to have to then reassess their productivity potential due to the fact that a portion of their country be utilised for coal seam gas extraction.

This could seriously compromise their farming enterprise.

Property owners need every square metre of their land to be sustainable.

If bank loans are required these repayment rates have been processed with the landholder's workable land accessibility for cropping and stock taken into consideration. If the landholder's income from this land is then compromised due to the fact that he is unable to access part of this land, this places the landholder in an unfair position re his loan repayments and sustainable existence.

This could have the potential to render the property in question unviable.

6. The 'talk' of coal seam gas companies creating jobs is very questionable.

In regional areas at present, many of the people capable and trained for these mining jobs are those working in agriculture.

Therefore, there is no real job growth, just movement of employees from one sector to another.

This is already causing very real skills shortages in the agricultural sector where employers cannot compete with the high wages offered by cash strapped mining companies.

Also many gas companies maintain a fly in/ fly out policy so where are the creation of extra jobs in this scenario for rural people?

They do not exist and companies are being deliberately misleading and 'inventing' statistics to support their case.

In conclusion, I call on the government to show planning for the future of this country by:-

- Setting aside and quarantining strategic prime agricultural land and water from the inappropriate development of coal seam gas mining.

- Recognizing that there ARE substitutes for energy production but not for clean food and water.

- Showing respect and due democratic process by consulting with the communities affected BEFORE any exploration licenses are granted and accepting the will of the people in the decision making process.

- The Coal seam gas industry will only last until the resource is depleted whereas we have an agricultural industry which, given the opportunity, will be going into a bright future. Planning for, and having a vision for the future of Australia has been essential, and sadly lacking in the debate. Mining and coal seam gas are outdated and we should be embracing the new renewable technologies of the future.

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