

**Submission
No 729**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

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I would like to make a submission concerning the impact of coal seam gas drilling on people, on food production, and on the rights of farmers.

It seems unlikely that William Shakespeare would have anything of relevance to say about coal seam gas exploration, but I believe that he does.

Let me remind you about *The Merchant of Venice*. The merchant, Antonio, makes a bargain with Shylock, the penalty for a forfeit being that Shylock can remove a pound of Antonio's flesh, cut from near his heart.

Antonio loses.

When Shylock is about to claim his pound of flesh, Antonio's lawyer Portia points out that the deal is for a pound of flesh only, and if Shylock spills a drop of blood, he is violating the terms of the agreement and will himself be penalised.

My husband and I have spent 30 years building up our soil from degraded, hard and of questionable value, to prime condition. By reduced tillage, mulching, crop rotation and judicious use of herbicides and fertilisers, we have brought it to such a state that my husband claims it's so soft it could be cultivated by dragging a tom-cat backwards by the tail. This soil is our asset, our treasure, our future, and being immensely productive, it is also the future of the thousands of people that it feeds.

Well, I can accept that someone may have the right to the minerals underneath my cultivation, but when they move their drilling rigs onto my property, I'll be standing there saying, "Hang on; yes, you can take whatever is underneath, but don't you DARE touch one grain of my cultivation!".

Shylock retreats, baffled, and Antonio remains unviolated.

What are MY chances, do you think?