

**Submission  
No 689**

## **INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS**

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## **SUBMISSION TO THE NSW INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS**

Never before in my lifetime has an issue motivated so many people all around Australia to attend community meetings, completely filling the venues; to stop their daily lives to write letters to newspapers and politicians; to attend public protest meetings and to educate themselves about an issue. Coal seam gas mining is what we are concerned about, because we know what is happening in Queensland and overseas, and what is planned for where we live. We are people from all walks of life, we cannot be categorised as farmers, protestors or political lobbyists. We are the people who live in Australia. We want you to listen to us because we are worried about what will happen if coal seam gas mining keeps developing in NSW in widespread areas, near creeks and homes and in our bushland and farmland. A self-regulating industry without independent monitoring can only lead to disaster. To mine more gas than we need for our own consumption and to export vast amounts is purely for short term financial gain for a very few people, leaving a legacy of potential problems for the people who actually live here.

I live on a property in Kyogle Shire, and work in the Richmond River Shire in beautiful Northern New South Wales. People who live here love our surroundings and value it for clean quality food production, recreation, World Heritage National parks, clean rivers and water bores, wildlife and unique flora.

Coal seam gas mining directly affects me, because the area I live in currently has gas exploration being conducted, with massive development planned for the region. Bowerbird 2 gas well has been explored by Metgasco not far from where I live. Seismic testing has been conducted even closer to my home. No information was given to locals when these explorations occurred. Whether a gas company wants access to my land or not, I should be informed better, they could end up drilling for gas on an adjacent property, or upstream from me. My life will be impacted by noise, emissions and waste water. Indeed, my life is already changed.

I hold fears for the quality of water and land, and the health of the people, livestock and wildlife should coal seam gas mining be allowed to proceed on a large scale in a “self-regulating” industry.

We cannot afford to put doubt on the quality of the food grown in this region.

We have high rainfall and frequent flooding. Photographs of water storage ponds next to a creek at an exploration gas well at Dobie’s Bight appeared in the news this year shown to be overflowing from recent rains, and with torn liners. Other gas wells at Bentley and Dyraaba were filmed with gas bubbling into water around the wells. A gas power station is to be developed unbelievably close to where people live in the town of Casino, with associated huge evaporation ponds that could overflow in a flood and reach the Richmond River. Gas wells are to be sited on the floodplain at Casino.

CSG mining produces vast quantities of waste that represent a serious environmental risk:

1. Management of waste water is highly problematic and leads to environmental degradation where storage, leakage, spillage and discharge occurs.
2. Treatment of waste water results in the production of a highly concentrated 'brine' by-product, that is extremely difficult to dispose of without causing harm.

Farmland cannot function properly with gas wells every 750m and the associated roads and pipelines and compressor stations. Farmland produces our food. I do not accept differentiating between "prime" farmland and other farmland. It is all valuable land in Australia, and our water supply is a precious resource that must be protected.

I hold concerns for what will happen beneath the earth to aquifers regarding contamination. Also there have been earthquakes associated with gas drilling. We do not know what will happen when vast areas beneath the surface have pressure released as water and gas rush to the surface. For mining companies to suggest that they will pump waste water back down just leads to more questions about contamination and uncontrolled pressures below the ground.

Our roads will be damaged by trucks. Already a new stretch of bitumen I travel on every day has badly damaged edges from the heavy double-bogey trucks that served the Bowerbird 2 exploration well. This road is not designed for heavy traffic. My council will bear the cost of this.

Property values will go down wherever gas is developed. This leaves the people in an unfair situation, with financial loss.

We already have an economy here. We do not want it displaced by mining. What's the point? Some locals will lose their current means of earning an income.

Already communities are being split.

The direction Australia should follow is to develop renewable energy sources. Coal Seam gas mining has serious long term polluting impacts on the air, soil water and people. It is not low carbon when the whole process is considered. To call it a transition to clean energy is misleading, especially when much more than we need here will be produced and exported. I say keep it in the ground. If any is to be mined, do so on a small scale for Australia's use only and regulate the industry independently and rigorously. Any problems caused by gas mining will be left for us to deal with after the mining companies have finished and moved away.

As an asthmatic I am sensitive to air-borne chemicals. Flaring from gas wells, and other emissions from the wells and compressor stations are bad for human health. Carcinogenic

substances such as BTEX chemicals are given off from the coal seam and the mining process. Some of the chemicals are endocrine disruptors. Wildlife will be harmed as well.

My concerns about coal seam gas mining are for all of Australia as well as where I live and NSW as a whole. It is ludicrous to think that urban areas in Sydney have gas wells, and that the “lungs” of NSW, the Pilliga Forest is to undergo extensive environmental disruption due to gas mining.

I have seen the grief of the people affected by coal seam gas mining around Tara and Chinchilla in Queensland. I do not want to share their fate. I don't want to live in a gas field.

I ask for:

A full moratorium on all forms of coal seam gas drilling until the environmental, social and health impacts have been rigorously and independently assessed, and should such assessment show that CSG drilling is shown to have undesirable effects, the mining cease or be small scale and heavily regulated and monitored.

Coal seam gas exploration and mining to be made subject to all relevant environmental legislation, including the native vegetation and water management laws. New laws to be developed to regulate this industry. Independent monitoring and enforcement of such laws.

The provision of standing to ensure that the community has full legal rights to challenge and enforce environmental laws under which coal seam gas companies are operating.

The provision of a right in the Petroleum (Onshore) Act to allow landholders to refuse consent for coal seam gas exploration or production on their land.

A prohibition on coal seam gas exploration and mining in important bushland, valuable farmland, groundwater aquifers, residential areas and public lands.

Angela Froud

