

**Submission
No 242**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Ms Katrina McDonald

Date received: 3/09/2011

NSW Parliament Inquiry
Coal Seam Gas
3 September 2011

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission regarding Coal Seam Gas (CSG) development in NSW. I congratulate the NSW Government for taking steps towards improving the approvals and planning for appropriate development of this industry. I emphasise that the Government needs to understand that the option of "no development" (and corresponding "zero harm") may be the best result for the people of NSW, both now and in the future. With some industries, talk of "balance" is nonsense.

I am an agricultural scientist with extensive experience, skills and qualifications in primary production, natural resource management and community activities. I live and farm on the highly fertile Liverpool Plains region of NSW. Since our farm is located outside the current coal exploration license areas, and has no exploratory coal seam gas drilling close by, I have no vested interest in the development or otherwise, of the coal seam gas industry – hence my opinions can be viewed as objective, and scientifically based.

I wish to make the following points:

- To date, development has been allowed to occur without the necessary **scientific rigour**. Further, the long-term environmental and social impacts of CSG development are likely to outweigh the short-term financial benefits of the industry. The **precautionary principle** must be adopted before the granting of any new exploration license or mining or petroleum lease.
- Results of CSG exploration and extraction in other regions (for example USA and Queensland) are demonstrating the disastrous **environmental and social impacts** of this industry, even in the short-term. For example: problems with treatment of water, toxic waste, carcinogenic compounds, ill health, declining land values and uncertainty for rural communities.
- The impacts of drilling (for both exploration and extraction) on **aquifers, the Murray Darling Basin and the Great Artesian Basin** are unknown. These connected ground water and surface systems are vital to the survival of natural systems, rural communities and food production. How will Australia avoid becoming a third world country if these aquifers, rural communities and/or food production systems are destroyed?

- Coal seam gas is not "clean and green," and will continue to contribute to damaging **climate change**. In the move to a low carbon economy, we do *not* need CSG as transition from coal to renewables. The renewable technology is available now - if Governments agree to fully support and progress these options: With **climate change** posing a major threat to our global existence, we need a rapid transition to renewable energy sources away from fossil fuels (not towards them). Further, exporting the emissions makes no difference to their effect on our atmosphere.
- It is ironic that we are discussing the expansion of these polluting industries when we should be looking at their contraction. The **Principles of Ecological Sustainable Development (ESD)**, one of which is **intergenerational equity** must be truly taken into account by a responsible Government, as paying lip service is no longer sufficient to protect our natural resource base, and satisfy our communities. Is it equitable to leave a warmer world, damaged aquifers, reduced food growing potential, and carcinogens, for future generations to deal with?
- True **triple bottom line** accounting and reporting requires proper attention to environmental and social impacts of decisions, irrespective of *when* or *where* these occur. Traditional benefit-cost analysis, using a discounted cash-flow approach is no longer appropriate as the basis for decision making if governments and corporations are to adhere stringently to "triple bottom line" accounting and "principles of ESD."

As a community member, I look forward to continued input, and working with the Government for the benefit of the current and future generations and the on-going sustainability of our natural resource base.

Yours sincerely,

Katrina McDonald
B. Rur. Sc (Hons)
Post Grad. Dip. Ag. Ec.
Post Grad. Cert. Sus. Ag.