

Submission
No 290

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Mrs Karyne Gough
Organisation: Wollombi Valley Against Gas Extraction
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Dear Sirs,

I write on behalf of WAGE, Wollombi Valley Against Gas Extraction, as a submission into the inquiry regarding coal-seam methane gas extraction in NSW. Wage represents the whole community of Wollombi and Laguna which is situated in the lower Hunter Valley. We request an immediate and full moratorium of coal-seam gas drilling until all aspects of health, social and environmental impacts have been rigorously assessed by an independent body.

We believe strongly that all current coal-seam gas mining be made subject to every relevant environmental legislation including water management laws. The fact that they currently do not, indicates that the industry knows that the nature of their operations transgress these laws.

Looking at the devastation caused by coal-seam gas mining in America shows us clearly what to expect here. Already, we have many leaking gas wells which are causing serious health problems for people and animals. Some gas companies are also dumping waste product on the ground without even minimal protection to the environment. The dumping of toxic waste into the Condamine River is an example of this. Common sense should dictate that the community is entitled to enforce appropriate environmental laws to current mining activities. The previous irresponsible Labor govt. allowed coal mining companies to encroach on rural residential areas, particularly in the Hunter Valley, which has resulted in many people being constantly sick due to the coal dust. These same people, some of whom I know personally, spend a good portion of their weekly wage buying medications to alleviate their health problems. Do you think that's fair? The development of a coal-seam gas industry will only compound that problem.

Of equal importance is the erosion of democratic rights of landholders. By what right does a govt. have to allow a private company to invade private property with the intention of industrialising it, thereby rendering it worthless because the land cannot then be sold? Just because a man-made law allows such theft doesn't make it morally right. How would you like to pay a mortgage on a property that was worthless? How would you like to lose your life's savings because your property was rendered useless by industrialisation? How would you like your mental and physical health ruined at the same time because of the diabolical situation just outlined? There are many hardworking people who now find themselves in very dire circumstances because of these events. The pittance of 'compensation' paid by a gas company to the owner of a property, usually only a few thousand dollars, will never make up for the loss of value of their land. At the very least a gas mining company should be required to pay full market value for any private property they use. Anything less is a free land grab of private property sanctioned by a greedy and immoral government.

Towns and communities in Qld and NSW are being ruined by mining. Our culture and national identity is being slowly erased because mining companies move into a town, divide the community, ruin the fabric of that town and destroy the immediate environment to the point where people move out for good. Small towns can't survive on a handful of people.

Why have governments allowed mining on agricultural land? Are politicians mad? How do we expect to feed ourselves in the future once good cropping land has been devastated by mining? Import food and make people pay a fortune for it?

We urge you to immediately stop the madness of the 'gas-rush'. No person in their right mind would allow such wholesale destruction once informed about the nature of coal-seam gas extraction.

Your Sincerely,
Mrs Karyne Gough