

**Submission
No 270**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Mr John Pearce

Date received: 06/09/2011

J PEARCE SPRINGDALE & CO

To The General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5
Legislative Council

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Private Submission to "Impacts of Coal Seam Gas Inquiry"

My wife and I own and operate the property [redacted] in the Upper Hunter, at [redacted]

[redacted] We irrigate our flats from the Martindale Creek, running beef cattle and agistment for 150 thoroughbred and pleasure horses.

Martindale Valley is a beautiful quite rural setting, housing a wide range of agricultural businesses with an average of 200 ha. These businesses encompass horse studs, horse agistment, lucerne hay production, vineyards, fat lamb and cattle production.

- *We have grave concerns regarding the proposed coal seam gas exploration in our close proximity in Martindale, as well as Baerami Creek, Kerrabee, Widden Valley and surrounding areas.*
- *We wish to strongly object to it's continuation without further feasibility and environmental studies.*
- *There needs to be a plan put in place as a safeguard from long lasting impacts on our prime agricultural land.*

We have read the 'Inquiry Terms of Reference' and comment as follows -

1. **The environmental and health impact of CSG**

(a) *Effect on ground and surface water systems*

- We feel there is a huge risk to our surface water and underground aquifers.
- In the Martindale Valley we rely heavily on the underground water supply as well as the Martindale Creek.

(b,c) *Risks – Effects related to the use of chemicals, and hydraulic fracturing*

- The potential risk of contamination and poisoning is totally unacceptable, particularly if the mining companies engage in 'fracking' with the accompanying chemicals.

(d) *Effect on Crown Lands including travelling stock routes and State Forests*

- **Wollemi National Park** - is part of the World Heritage Listed Greater Blue Mountains National Park and is home to the Wollemi Pine. The Park surrounds and divides our valleys.
- Martindale, is a long narrow valley – largely no more than one kilometre wide, with National Park on each side.
- **Fire regulations** - Methane gas is not toxic but is an extremely flammable gas.
- The process of drilling and extracting gas involves heavy machinery.
- There are inherent fire risks associated with the whole process.
- However coal seam gas mining is **exempt from Fire Regulations**.
- In our world of "forecasted extreme weather conditions", this defies logic.
- This perhaps typifies the lack of adequate regulations embracing the coal seam gas industry.

2. **The economic and social implications of CSG activities**

(a) ***Legal rights of property owners and property values***

Adverse impact on rural land

- Access for Coal Seam Gas workers and machinery onto our property would seriously disrupt the day to day running of our business especially the horse agistment.
- Because of the nature of our business, our property is divided into 41 small paddocks to facilitate the grazing & handling of the cattle and horses.
- Access roads dividing small paddocks into smaller ones again, would certainly affect machinery movements such as ploughing, haymaking, seeding, harvesting as well as interfere with stock movement and watering.
- Access by Gas employees coming & going especially with heavy machinery would be very difficult, and disruptive to the everyday operation of this horse complex.
- Any interference from exploratory work or coal seam gas production would have an extremely adverse impact on this property & could well make it impossible to continue to operate the business.
- The noise, dust, potential gas leaks and unsightliness of drilling rigs would be totally unacceptable.
- If the government decides the gas is more important to the country than the farmers
 - a) we feel if an acceptable access agreement including realistic compensation cannot be agreed upon, and
 - b) this would vary from place to place depending on the type and intensity of the farming enterprise,
 - c) we feel the only other alternative would be for the gas company to purchase the property at an agreeable price, not a devalued price created by the gas industry in the area.

(b) Food security and agricultural activity

- We have lived and worked here, operating this property in the Martindale Valley for over forty years.
- We chose our property for the agricultural richness with which this area has been blessed.
- Every farming enterprise is dependent on clean reliable water for irrigation, stock and domestic requirements.
- Prohibition of mining on valuable prime agricultural land should be strongly considered to preserve the very essence of our Country, Australia. We need all the quality land we can utilize for agricultural purposes and primary production to provide lifestyle and feed the growing population of this country – as well as export to countries in need.
- We should not be considering procedures that prohibit or limit these possibilities to the detriment of our country.

(c) Local Government including provision of local/regional infrastructure and local planning control mechanisms - impacts

- The infrastructure associated with coal seam gas production such as pipelines, compressor stations and well heads are all unacceptable infringements on anyone's property or lifestyle.
- Local rural roads could not be expected to cope with the thousands of vehicular movements needed to service the coal seam gas exploration and extraction processes.
- The roads up local valleys are only one car wide in many places. With so many extra vehicles, especially trucks, the risk of a serious accident is considerable, particularly at school bus times.

3. The role of CSG in meeting the future energy needs of NSW

- *Before we go down this path – let us not leave any alternate avenue of possibility unexplored*
ie Solar, Wind and Water.....

Social license

- At a coal seam gas information meeting held at Baerani Hall on 16th July 2011, Muswellbrook Mayor – Martin Rush called on Planet Gas CEO – Ian Halstead to withdraw his mining operations from the area because he did not have a ‘social license’.
- Ian Halstead assured the meeting he would consult with Planet Gas’s board of directors and reply in a fortnight. *No reply has been received to date.*
- Jeremy Buckingham MLC addressed this same meeting *and his call for a 12 month moratorium on coal seam gas exploration was met with thunderous applause.*
- *Near 200 members of the local community* and surrounding areas attended.
- Not one person from the local community spoke in support of coal seam gas.
- Clearly coal seam gas mining companies have no ‘social license’ to operate in this area.

Signed

JOHN PEARCE

Dated this day

6.9.2011