Submission No 812

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

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The Hon Robert Brown
Chair
NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into Coal Seam Gas
Parliament House, Macquarie Street
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Dear Sir

I would like the following items to be taken into consideration:

1. Food Security – Our fertile land is irreplaceable. Our food bowls should be protected and our farmers need to be supported. The cumulative effect of the CSG industry on the food chain must be examined at length. The worst case scenario of polluted water, soil and air needs to be completely understood. As this is a relatively new industry, despite claims it has had adequate assessments of worst case scenarios and resolutions. The resolutions, method statements, risk assessments etc, need to be assessed by independent health, farming and scientific bodies, not just the Mining Industry and Government. At a time when the Earth is overpopulated one of the biggest threats to humanity will be our ability to feed ourselves, our children and their children.

2. Employment is a major concern for all communities and CSG extraction is often spoken of creating more jobs. This may be the case in some areas. I believe that there will only be a limited number of new long-term jobs created and there is the risk that a far larger number of permanent jobs will be lost as a result of the damage caused to farming and tourism in the regions affected.

3. Coal seam gas must not take precedence over property owners' rights. The rules governing CSG mining must be amended to ensure that property owners' rights are not impacted in any way. The amendments should include that a property owner has the ability to say no to mining and that is final. That the landholder must not be then taken to arbitration etc. Landholders must be given an even playing field. Mining companies have a massive industry, lawyers and government all giving them a helping hand. Where as a landholder has just themselves. This is not right.

4. Transparency. Ministers and their immediate families who are approving and making these decisions which affect so many people must not have investments in business which profit from CSG which include not just the mining companies, but associated infrastructure needed to build the CSG Industry. We want to know that our government is working for the public and future generations not building their own wealth. If Ministers have vested interests this is a clear conflict of interest.

5. Water is so important being in a desert country. The preservation and use of this water is a responsibility which should not be taken lightly. I feel that it has not been proven that our water is going to be protected. Until it can be guaranteed this industry must not be allowed to continue.

Ross Dunn was recently quoted acknowledging that ''Drilling will, to varying degrees, impact on adjoining aquifers the extent of impact and whether the impact can be managed is the question". If the industry still has questions not answered this is not responsible management of our water. This must be stopped until everything is understood.

6. Miners must not be given free access to water. Farmers are not, neither should miners.

7. The treatment and disposal of waste water needs to be worked out before any more mining goes ahead. With recent reports of acid rain near Sydney what will be done to prevent this if evaporation ponds are the method of disposal. Simple science teaches us the water cycle and it seems that evaporation ponds will inevitably end up in the water cycle.

8. The way in which mining companies approach individual landholders must be amended. Neighbours may not tell each other what is happening because of confidentiality agreements etc. Mining companies are dividing and conquering communities. It should be done in a way where the process is transparent. Letters are sent out notifying each landholder who will be approached, maps of reserves they're interested in and what the gas feild plans are like. If a property owner says no. That should be final.

9. There are very major concerns regarding the environment, health and social welfare in areas where CSG mining occurs. The rules governing CSG mining must be amended to ensure that all of these concerns are addressed properly.

10. I understand that research raises serious questions regarding the whole life-cycle carbon footprint of CSG. There seems to be more evidence that CSG's impact is not smaller. The NSW Government should undertake its own research and independent of the Mining Industry into this matter before sanctioning significant expansion of CSG.

    We know that the gas is there. Why is it so important it is extracted so quickly? It will still be there in 10 years time after adequate assessments have been undertaken. The approach we should be taking is much slower and more thorough. This could be taken as advice as expressed by Alan Randall in the SMH 20-21 August "For risk managers and regulators there is so much more to learn about the technology, its consequences and appropriate remedies. Australia still has the opportunity to manage these risks rather than cope with them adaptively."

    I trust that you will take my concerns into account. I am but one of very many who have serious doubts about coal seam gas.

    Yours faithfully

    Mark & Kashanna Osmond-Dreyer