

**Submission
No 394**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

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SUBMISSION

GENERAL PURPOSE COMMITTEE NO.5

ENQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

I submit this short letter as a private citizen, mother, grandmother, past small business owner and rural property owner. I present for your consideration the following comments and list them under areas of personal interest. My letter is not a technical statement but rather a demand for consistency, fairness, impartiality and meaningful dialogue with the voting public who entrust their elected officials to put their interests first.

I also wish to present a couple of key concerns and requests for information and clarification that I do not believe have been intelligently answered by state, commonwealth or local governments.

Legislation

A request that a review of the current relevant State and Federal legislation that relate to the protection of water, environment and health take place to cross reference for inconsistencies against all legislation pertaining to the coal seam gas (CSG) industry. That the rationale and method for determining why the CSG industry would be considered for any exclusions or exemptions under any existing legislation pertaining to the protection of water, environment or health.

This would include the reasons why local government is able to apply for such exclusions and exemptions to water, environmental and health legislation in their local government areas.

My request that this legislation be reviewed in the absence of the consideration of royalties paid to the state of Queensland and the Commonwealth government and all other financial considerations.

I realise that this is very difficult in the current climate; however robust research independent of the financial economic implications will identify the margin of compromise that is occurring at the policy level.

Short-term impacts

A request that the short term impacts on surface and underground water, environmental, social and economic risks of the coal seam gas extraction industry on all intended geographical areas in Queensland, and those currently under coal seam gas claim, be researched, documented and made public. This would also include the impacts on food production, water, and housing and measured against sustainability and social indicators for community well-being and environmental health. This research should be conducted by an impartial, well recognised and regarded academic institution in collaboration with peak state agricultural bodies, non-government organisations, not-for profits, registered charities, peak body land developers and managers, real estate organisations and local industry and business. This body of work should cover the construction phase of the coal seam gas industry and the first ten years of implementation of a thirty-year project.

Long-term impacts

A request that the long -term water, environmental, social and economic impacts of the coal seam gas on all intended geographical areas and those currently under coal seam gas claim be researched documented and made public. This research would cover the same broad base of stakeholders and include the impact on import and export markets on a state and national level. The long-term impacts should cover thirty-year project period and a twenty-year rehabilitation, revegetation and recovery period. The required financial contribution by the coal seam gas industry into the twenty-year recovery period should also be based on research, evidenced through state and federal governments and an independent, well regarded and respected academic institution.

Personal comment

In addition; I would like to add this comment: having lived in the USA for six years from 1996-2002, I had the privilege of working with Native American elders in both Montana and South Dakota. The elders in Montana have lost many friends due to the health impacts of mining on their lands. They have witnessed the "gold rush mentality" in different guises over hundreds

of years and it appears that the coal seam gas extraction industry is fast becoming another "gold rush" – "boom and bust" experience. As a nation, if we do not proceed with care and attention to the lessons of the past, the effects of our decisions will be far reaching and create the environmental and social devastation that has occurred throughout the historical past.

I believe there is a fundamental shift required to achieve in practice the ethical standards and principles stated in all levels of government policy and the economic progress required for Australia to succeed on a national and international stage.

I welcome this enquiry, I look forward to its findings and I trust that the outcomes will lead to the development of a framework that will actually provide for the protection of our valuable water resources, our fragile environment and the health of our community.

Kind Regards,

Susan Becchio