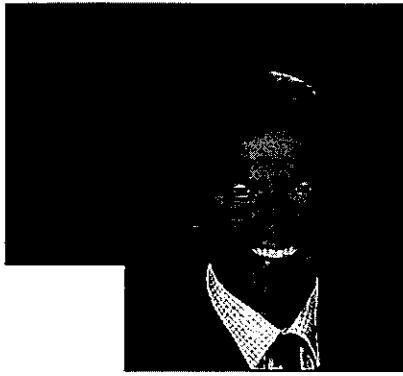


Submission
No 332

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Mr Robert Oakeshott MP

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7 September 2011

SUBMISSION TO NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INQUIRY ON COAL-SEAM GAS

I write on behalf of more than 1450 people from the Electorate of Lyne who have raised concerns about coal-seam gas (CSG) exploration on the Mid-North Coast of NSW, particularly in the Manning, Gloucester and Camden Haven regions.

During the past 12 months, several public meetings have been held at Laurieton, Taree and Gloucester where residents are concerned about the possible environmental effects of CSG exploration and development.

Many landholders, oyster farmers, and small business operators whose livelihoods depend on a vibrant tourism industry have also raised concerns about the extraction process known as "fracking", where vast amounts of water, sand and chemicals are pumped down a well at high pressure to fracture coal to release coal gas.

The CSG concerns shared by many Mid-North Coast residents are the result of a failure by government to develop public policy that places a premium on access to clean water, soil and nutritional food.

I have been vocal in my criticism of the former NSW Government over its rushed decision to approve 110 gas wells in the Gloucester Basin in the lead-up to the 2011 state election.

The new NSW Government has promised a lot in terms of protecting productive lands, such as those in the Camden Haven and Manning valleys and the Gloucester basin.

This inquiry is an opportunity for the NSW Government to recognise the value of agricultural land to Australia's food security needs and to protect these productive lands from finite resource interests.

The conflict in land use creates uncertainty for the farm sector but it also is becoming increasingly evident that the methods used to extract coal-seam gas are creating even greater uncertainty among the general population.

Communities in the Lyne electorate that are aware of coal-seam gas exploration in their region are very concerned about the potential consequences of CSG mining on the environment, the health of the population, ground water and surface water resources, and industries, such as tourism, that are dependent on a clean, pristine environment.

Of most concern to residents is the potential harm caused by the fracking process to underground aquifers. The potential for contamination, particularly where aquifers are close to exploration areas, is a risk that many Manning and Camden Haven residents in particular are not willing to take.

Other concerns raised by some of the 1450-plus residents who have contacted the Lyne electorate office about coal-seam gas include damage to local infrastructure caused by trucks and service vehicles associated with the exploration and extraction process.

Based on the concerns raised in the Manning and Camden Haven regions, it is evident there is a conflict developing in land use and this needs to be managed by the NSW Government through appropriate land use policies.

I am happy to provide the Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee No 5 with copies of the petitions and correspondence received by my office if this material is considered of further value to the inquiry.

Yours faithfully

ROBERT OAKESHOTT MP
MEMBER FOR LYNE
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