

Submission
No 632

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

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**Submission to Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5
on Coal Seam Gas Mining**

The following submissions and recommendations are made from the perspective of existing and prospective property owners:

Submissions

1. Information as to whether or not any particular property in NSW is or may be affected by Coal Seam Gas (CSG) exploration or extraction activities is too difficult to find.

Specifically, that information is available on the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) website which assumes knowledge on the part of those searching for this information that CSG licences are:

- (a) administered by the DPI whose website is the appropriate and only online resource
- (b) a species of "petroleum title" which the DPI includes with "minerals" titles
- (c) identified and described in more detail behind an apparently irrelevant tab entitled "Title Status Reports."

2. The information behind the DPI website tab entitled "Title Status Reports" is incomplete and misleading.

Specifically, that information fails to disclose:

- (a) that a "block" equates to an area of 75km²
- (b) the geographic extent of the areas that are subject to petroleum titles. A clear example is PEL 463 which is described on DPI's website as being "[a]bout 6 km ESE of Hornsby" without further disclosing that this is a reference to the northern most point of the relevant "block" and that PEL 463 in fact covers an area of 2,385km² of the Sydney Basin

- (c) the relationship between the title holder and other stakeholders. For example, in relation to PEL 463 there is no explanation of or reference to the relationship between the titleholder Macquarie Energy Pty Ltd and Dart Energy.
3. It is self evident that the present system of requiring CSG proponents only to advertise notice of applications for exploration licences and assessment leases is an insufficient method of notifying existing and prospective property owners of CSG activities.

Recommendations

1. The DPI website should be revised to be more user friendly and modeled on the principle of being a complete, reliable and transparent register of all relevant information. That information should be accessible by laypersons using keywords relevant to CSG rather than jargon borrowed from scientific literature or the *Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991*.
2. CSG proponents should be required to give actual, written notice to all landholders and stakeholders of an intention to enter into a CSG assessment lease or production lease and those landholders and stakeholders should thereafter have a reasonable time and opportunity to object before any such lease is granted and/or registered.

This is no different to the principle underlying the present practice of notifying Development Applications under local planning laws. That notifications may be necessary over a wide geographic area should not excuse non notification of those with a right to know deriving from their ownership of property which might be affected whether positively, negatively, directly or indirectly, by CSG mining activities.

3. Receipt of such a notice should be a matter which vendors are obliged to disclose in all contracts for the sale land.

Yours sincerely

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