

Submission
No 209

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 4/09/2011

Partially Confidential

Our biggest concern about coal seam gas extraction is the great possibility that it will ruin prime agricultural land. By all accounts, the gas extraction part of it will be exhausted in approximately 30 years. However the world's population will need food for much longer than that.

Farming is a very sustainable activity. Farmers can keep on producing so long as they can get a fair go from government legislators, uncontaminated fertile soils, clean reliable water sources and a fair climate (which, of course, governments have no control over, however, much they would like to think they have).

Past governments have played an integral role in the science that has developed the staying power of crops, the protection of water and soil quality. They knew that food security is of vital importance to this and other countries.

By all reports, the biggest waste products of coal seam gas extraction is salt and it appears that none of the mining companies have a definite, clear, sustainable, environmentally sound solution of how they are going to store/dispose/use it. We need viable solutions from the mining companies for this before proceeding.

To have clean healthy food is a basic human right. Humanity dies without food.

The protection of agricultural farmland should be utmost in the minds of both Federal and State politicians, who have in their hands the power to introduce legislation, to protect the food security of Australia.

The protection of the unique black soil plains of north-west NSW, and all other agricultural land that is threatened by mining, should be a priority for all state politicians.

When it rains, the black soil plains of north-western NSW produce wheat, barley, chickpeas, canola, cotton, lamb, beef, eggs, just to name a few.

If the governments of this nation, who are supposed to be representing its people, allow the farmlands of this nation to be put at risk by mining, and in particular coal seam gas extraction in prime agricultural regions, the irreversible effects will change Australia from having a clean, healthy availability of food and fibre to a quarry of eventually nothing. It will not only be farmers that are affected, it will be the people, such as agronomists, contractors, accountants, and banks who contribute to a farming operation's success, and the farming operation's patronage of them, which adds to their success.

The non-renewable sector of coal seam gas may provide a short-term solution to money for the government and an energy void, but you are asking Australian farmers to give up their ability to produce food and fibre in the name of a short term gain.

You are allowing the ancient waters of the Great Artesian Basin to be depleted. The NSW government has dramatically reduced the amount of water that irrigating farmers can draw from the GAB to protect the aquifers.

Our farm relies entirely on water from the GAB. Now you are allowing the mining people to access the water, and possibly contaminate the whole source. There is no real knowledge of if or how each of the aquifers is connected, so don't mess with it. It is our understanding that some rather nasty chemicals are used in the coal seam gas extraction process, and if some of those should leak into the GAB, it could contaminate some or all of the farms that rely on that water source. We cannot allow you to afford the risk of this contamination.

We are on the precipice in NSW. We have only one chance of getting this right, before the Coal Seam Gas industry, with a nod from the state government, takes over the lives, futures, farms and waters of our State. There will be the ever present threat and push by mining companies (often foreign backed) to mine our assets from under our feet.

The cumulative effect in the paddocks for farmers of the placement of coal seam gas wells and subsequent infrastructure such as roads, above and below ground pipelines, compressor stations, methane risers, holding dams and the unproved safety of the enormous interference to the water aquifers, let alone the waste saline water problem, will have a most detrimental impact on the productivity and financial viability of every farming business.

It is not miners who grow food, it's not politicians who grow food, it's not lawyers who grow food, it's farmers. We are providing food security to this country and the world. We know how to do it and do it well.

Please enjoy your next meal, and think of all farmers.