

**Submission
No 253**

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

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Date received: 7/09/2011



7 September 2011

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5
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Dear Sir/Madam

RE: SUBMISSION TO THE NSW INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers (RDA – Northern Rivers) welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the NSW General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 regarding the Coal Seam Gas Inquiry.

Our organisation is a non-profit community-based and regionally focused organisation that connects people and businesses in our region to opportunities, through partnerships focusing on community, environment and economy.

RDA – Northern Rivers applauds the NSW Government for taking a proactive approach towards managing the impacts and opportunities associated with coal seam gas mining in NSW through this inquiry.

Communities in the Northern Rivers region (which includes the Clarence-Moreton Basin) have become very aware of the key issues associated with this form of mining, including:

- potential threats to food production and security, water sources and endangered species;
- extracting large volumes of low-quality water and impacts on connected surface and groundwater systems, some of which may already be fully or over-allocated;
- potential risk to public safety, through a build-up of gas in water bores which could result in large, uncontrolled gas releases which may pose a risk to public health and safety;
- loss of prime agricultural land;
- costs to pipe gas are likely to escalate due to potential changes in community expectations and regulation changes;
- potential for gas to migrate to existing water bores and aquifers:
 - the treatment, storage and disposal methods of the ‘produced water’ which is saline water extracted in the coal seam gas mining. Generally this water will be stored in large evaporation ponds or processed to reduce the volume of contaminated water with waste removed to treatment sites. Some operations plan to re-inject the water after treatment back into the aquifers;
 - doubts about the cumulative impact from multiple coal seam gas developments. For example, the Australian National Water Commission states, “Potential impacts of coal seam gas developments, particularly the cumulative effects of multiple projects, are not well understood;
- the potential for chemicals to enter the groundwater from fracking;



- government intervention;
- changes to regulations and potential disruption to long-term gas supply contracts;
- community concerns over the industry regulations and practices;
- uncertainty for the companies and their markets; and
- greenhouse impacts as methane is a far more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. This activity will increase the overall national emissions from extracting, piping, compressing, liquefying, flaring and venting gas and by clearing land as well as escaping gas.

RDA – Northern Rivers also recognises a number of benefits associated with coal seam gas mining, including:

- investment/business potential and associated employment growth for the emerging coal seam gas industry;
- current risk management strategies for coal seam gas projects are covered in substantial detail;
- a well supported and regulated CSG industry may be able to provide this region with a more secure and cheaper form of energy which is locally sourced.;
- an opportunity for the region to secure a potentially more reliable and cheaper power source ;
- an opportunity to support energy transitional requirements; and
- the understanding that any resource project contains risks.

This is an opportune time in the life of this emerging industry for the NSW Government to guide the future contribution and impact of the industry whilst responding to community concerns. RDA – Northern Rivers encourages the Inquiry to address the following critical features:

- adequate application of the precautionary principle required to address the outstanding issues and knowledge gaps;
- ensuring the growth of this industry through thoughtful and thorough regulation sooner rather than later; and
- each of the key issues referred to above.

RDA – Northern Rivers encourages the NSW Government to ensure consideration of these matters . For further information on any of the matters raised in this submission, please contact Katrina Luckie

Yours Sincerely,

Katrina Luckie
CEO