

Submission
No 269

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Ms Barbara Pearce

Date received: 06/09/2011

J PEARCE SPRINGDALE & CO

To The General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5
Legislative Council

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Private Submission to "Impacts of Coal Seam Gas Inquiry"

My husband and I own and operate the property [redacted] in the Upper Hunter, at

[redacted] We irrigate our flats from the Martindale
Creek, running beef cattle and agistment for 150 thoroughbred and pleasure horses.

Martindale Valley is a beautiful quite rural setting, housing a wide range of agricultural businesses with an average of 200 ha. These businesses encompass horse studs, horse agistment, lucerne hay, vineyards, sheep and cattle.

We have attended local community meetings in discussion with members of local council, the Muswellbrook Mayor - Martin Rush, Ian Halstead - Planet Gas CEO, and Jeremy Buckingham MLC. Together with local community members numbering around 200, and not one person from this group spoke in support of coal seam gas.

- *We have grave concerns regarding the proposed coal seam gas exploration in our close proximity in Martindale, as well as Baerami Creek, Kerrabee, Widden Valley and surrounding areas.*
- *We wish to strongly object to it's continuation without further feasibility and environmental studies*
- *There needs to be a plan put in place as a safeguard from long lasting impacts on our prime agricultural land.*

We have read the 'Inquiry Terms of Reference' and comment as follows -

1. The environmental and health impact of CSG

(a) *Effect on ground and surface water systems*

- We feel there is a huge risk to our surface water and underground aquifers.
- In the Martindale Valley we rely heavily on the underground water supply as well as the Martindale Creek.

(b, c) *Risks - Effects related to the use of chemicals, and hydraulic fracturing*

- The potential risk of contamination and poisoning is totally unacceptable, particularly if the mining companies engage in 'fracking' with the accompanying chemicals.

Effect on Crown Lands including travelling stock routes and State Forests

- **Wollemi National Park** - is part of the World Heritage Listed Greater Blue Mountains National Park and is home to the Wollemi Pine. The Park surrounds and divides our valleys.
- **Martindale**, is a long narrow valley - largely no more than one kilometre wide, with National Park on each side.
- **Fire regulations** - Methane gas is not toxic but is an extremely flammable gas.
- The process of drilling and extracting gas involves heavy machinery.
- There are inherent fire risks associated with the whole process.
- However coal seam gas mining is **exempt from Fire Regulations**.
- In our world of "forecasted extreme weather conditions", this defies logic.
- This perhaps typifies the lack of adequate regulations embracing the coal seam gas industry.

2. **The economic and social implications of CSG activities**

(a) Legal rights of property owners and property values

Adverse impact on rural land

- Access to for Coal Seam Gas onto our property would seriously disrupt the day to day running of our business.
- Because of the nature of our business, our property is divided into small paddocks to facilitate the handling of the cattle and horses.

- Access roads dividing small paddocks into smaller ones again, would certainly affect machinery movements such as ploughing, haymaking, seeding, harvesting as well as interfere with stock movement and watering.
- Access by heavy machinery would be very difficult, and disruptive.
- Any interference from exploratory work or coal seam gas production would have an extremely adverse impact on whoever's paddock it is in.
- The noise, dust, potential gas leaks and unsightliness of drilling rigs would be totally unacceptable.
- Compensation to landowners subjected to exploration and production is totally inadequate when considering the revenue generated.
- If after exploration it is decided that it is a proposition to continue, landowners should be offered a fair price for their land. Instead of what has happened in Queensland where at the end of the day they are left with all sorts of damage to their livelihood and no compensation.

(b) Food security and agricultural activity

- We have lived and worked here in the Martindale Valley for over forty years.
- We chose our property for the agricultural richness with which this area has been blessed.
- Every farming enterprise is dependent on clean reliable water for irrigation, stock and household requirements.

- Prohibition of mining on valuable prime agricultural land should be strongly considered to preserve the very essence of our Country, Australia. We need all the quality land we can utilize for agricultural purposes and primary production to feed the growing population of this country - as well as export to countries in need.
- We should not be considering procedures that prohibit or limit these possibilities to the detriment of our country.

(e) Local Government including provision of local/regional infrastructure and local planning control mechanisms - impacts

- The infrastructure associated with coal seam gas production such as pipelines, compressor stations and well heads are all unacceptable infringements on anyone's property or lifestyle.
- Local roads could not be expected to cope with the thousands of vehicular movements needed to service the coal seam gas exploration and extraction processes.
- The roads up local valleys are only one car wide in many places. With so many extra vehicles, especially trucks, the risk of a serious accident is considerable, particularly at school bus times.

3. The role of CSG in meeting the future energy needs of NSW

- *Before we go down this path - let us not leave any alternate avenue of possibility unexplored ie Solar, Wind and Water.....*

5. The Impact similar industries have had in other jurisdictions

- Land values - As soon as coal seam gas mining is mentioned in an area land values can expect to fall at least 30% and often more - that is if you could find a buyer.

Signed

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BARBARA PEARCE

Dated this day 6th September 2011

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