

Submission
No 872

INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

Name: Name suppressed
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1. CSG mining presents a major threat to New South Wales's water resources. The cost of permanently polluting and damaging our aquifers and river systems far outweighs any economic value this industry may bring in the short or medium term. Our water resources must be protected for future generations to ensure safe drinking water supplies and viable food production now and for the long term.
2. A large amount of evidence has already emerged that links CSG mining with irrevocable contamination and destruction of water resources. The CSG industry, itself, has admitted that damage to water resources is an inevitable consequence of CSG mining (Sydney Morning Herald, 3.8.11). It would be illogical and irresponsible for New South Wales to risk lifting the moratorium on this industry until the industry can develop technology that does not have adverse impacts on water resources and is able to prove this definitively.
3. Knowledge of Australia's groundwater systems is in its infancy. There is no adequate means of assessing the damage that would be done to groundwater if CSG mining were permitted in this state.
4. The extraction of CSG takes huge amounts of water – water that increasingly will be needed to produce food. New South Wales's water resources are already over extended. They cannot accommodate a CSG mining industry.
5. Strategies that aim to rehabilitate our rivers and water systems are already facing huge challenges. To further hamper these efforts with the added impacts of permanent contamination of water resources could risk permanently destroying these resources in New South Wales as well as the viability of local agricultural production.
6. Containment of the saline and contaminated water from CSG wells is a major environmental hazard.
7. The technology is unproven and the effects still not fully known.
8. When the whole life cycle of producing CSG is taken into account, per unit of energy released, burning shale gas produces between 120% and 200% of the emissions produced by burning coal.
9. Intensive systems of CSG wells (ie 200-400m spacing) are not compatible with agriculture.
10. The mining boom, of which CSG is a part, has many negative impacts on rural communities. These impacts must be urgently addressed.
 - a) the permanent destruction and pollution of water resources by mining activities.
 - b) the permanent destruction of agricultural land by mining activities.
 - c) the high Australian dollar caused by the mining boom is threatening the economic viability of food production, tourism and manufacturing in Australia, as well as exports.
 - d) the fragmentation and destruction of agricultural communities and economies by mining activities.
 - e) the collapse of rural communities and infrastructures caused by mining activities– the threat to the preservation of bush fire brigades, social services, employment balance, trades people, workers skilled in rural services, tourism caused by a shift to mining. Poverty in rural areas caused by 'dual economy'.
 - f) Permanent destruction and replacement of rural industries by a mining mono-culture.
 - g) Health problems, psychological impacts and costs imposed on rural communities by mining activities.
 - h) Social problems associated with mining towns and culture.
 - i) Drain of skilled labour, pressure on housing & all local infrastructure.
11. A proper cost benefit analysis must be conducted to weigh up the value of the royalties against the cost of providing the infrastructure, the health costs, the social costs to the community, the loss of property values and loss of agricultural, manufacturing, tourist and other industries destroyed by mining impacts. In addition, the value of the permanent loss of

water resources that cannot be replaced or decontaminated must be costed over the long term in such an analysis.

12. Since proposals to allow CSG mining in NSW have become public there has been huge public opposition to CSG mining industry being allowed to operate in this state. This opposition has been across the board in cities and rural areas (nearly 70% of Australian respondents to a recent survey on CSG mining supported a continued moratorium on any CSG industry being enforced until the full health and environment impacts were known (Sydney Morning Herald, 26.8.11).

13. Given the short timeframe allowed for submissions and the degree of public concern in NSW about CSG mining, I request that the Senate inquiry extends the time period for public submissions on this issue and informs the general public of their right to submit through advertising in major media outlets. I only found out about the opportunity to contribute a submission by chance this morning, so have had inadequate time to prepare a thorough response. I am aware of many other concerned people who would formally submit if they were aware of this inquiry and had adequate time to prepare.

14. Given the dangers of the industry in its current form and the threat it poses to NSW water systems, public health and agriculture and given the widespread degree of public opposition to CSG mining in NSW the moratorium on CSG mining in NSW must be maintained. There is much more study to be done and legislation to be changed before any decision is made regarding whether the CSG industry should be allowed to operate in this state.

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