

Submission  
No 256

## INQUIRY INTO COAL SEAM GAS

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# Hunter Environment Lobby Inc.

## SUBMISSION

### COAL SEAM GAS INQUIRY

#### Introduction

The Hunter Environment Lobby Inc (HEL) is a non profit community group established to promote environment protection in the Hunter Valley.

HEL has concerns about the rapid growth of the gas industry in the Hunter region through the large area of exploration licenses granted without any consideration of other land uses.

The current coal seam gas (CSG) exploration occurring in the Broke, Bunnan and Bylong areas has been undertaken with very little consideration of environmental impacts. The proposed CSG transmission pipeline from Coolah to Newcastle to connect with an export terminal in the Port of Newcastle has the potential to open up large scale production of CSG in the Hunter in an ad hoc manner.

No CSG proposal should be approved in the Hunter region until the Upper Hunter Regional Landuse Strategy is completed.

The cumulative impacts of the coal mining industry in the Hunter region have not been adequately considered or assessed. The additional potential impacts of wide scale CSG production must be considered in the context of the current level of landscape disturbance in the Hunter.

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- a. The current exploration of CSG in the Bulga- Broke area has caused a number of problems with ground and surface water systems. The storage and transport of highly saline water from the drill sites has resulted in illegal discharge onto land, problems with onground storage and issues with truck movements taking brine to disposal sites. The CSG industry has no sustainable solution to the handling of saline water produced by gas production.
- b. HEL does not support the injection of chemicals into aquifer systems to facilitate gas production. There is very little known about groundwater systems

in Australia. The potential to contaminate groundwater cannot be adequately mitigated and should not be supported by Government approvals processes.

- c. HEL does not support the use of hydraulic fracturing in the CSG extraction process. The environmental impacts of this process are unknown over the long term.
- d. Crown Lands, Travelling Stock Routes (TSRs) and State Forests should not be impacted by the vegetation clearing necessary for drill sites, production areas and transmission pipelines. These areas provide important ecosystem functions in the landscape and should not be fragmented by CSG infrastructure.

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HEL considers that CSG should not be relied on to meet the future energy needs of NSW. The rapid expansion of the industry is delaying the transition to renewable energy options. The industry is mainly targeted at the export market, rather than for domestic use and needs rigorous controls.

**Conclusion:**

HEL considers that a full moratorium on all forms of coal seam gas drilling is required until the environmental, social and health impacts have been rigorously and independently assessed.

The proposed regional land use strategies in NSW must include a prohibition on CSG exploration and mining in important bushland, valuable farmland, groundwater aquifers, residential areas and public lands.

CSG exploration and mining must be subject to all relevant environmental legislation, including the native vegetation and water management laws.

Yours sincerely

President

Wednesday 7 September 2011