

**INQUIRY INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE NSW CHIEF
SCIENTIST'S INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF COAL SEAM
GAS ACTIVITIES IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Armidale Action on Coal Seam Gas and Mining (AACSGM)
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INQUIRY INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE NSW CHIEF SCIENTIST'S INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF COAL SEAM GAS ACTIVITIES IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

Armidale Action on Coal Seam Gas and Mining thanks the Committee for the opportunity to participate in this important inquiry and report *on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the NSW Chief Scientist's Independent Review of Coal Seam Gas Activities in New South Wales*.

Armidale Action on Coal Seam Gas and Mining (AACSG&M) is an action group of Sustainable Living Armidale. Members of AACSG&M have played an active role in monitoring CSG exploration and production across North-West New South Wales; especially with regard to the Narrabri Gas Project since its inception. The comments contained in this submission are directed primarily to this Project.

AACSG&M's response is in two parts:

Part A: responds to part (a) and (b) of the terms of reference:

(a) the status of the implementation of the recommendations,

(b) the effectiveness of the implementation of the recommendations and whether or not there are gaps in implementation,

AACSG&M observes that the following recommendations have either **not been implemented at all** or **there are significant gaps in the implementation**:

Recommendation 4 That the full cost to Government of the regulation and support of the CSG industry be covered by the fees, levies, royalties and taxes paid by industry, and an annual statement be made by Government on this matter as part of the Budget process.

Recommendation 5 That Government use its planning powers and capability to designate those areas of the State in which CSG activity is permitted to occur

Recommendation 6: a single law covering all extractive industries

Recommendation 9: a robust and comprehensive policy of appropriate insurance and environmental risk coverage of the CSG industry to ensure financial protection short and long term. Government should examine the potential adoption of a three-layered policy of security deposits, enhanced insurance coverage, and an environmental rehabilitation fund

Recommendation 11: a centralised Risk Management and Prediction Tool for extractive industries

Recommendation 12: establish a standing expert advisory body on CSG to advise the government

- on the overall impact of CSG in NSW through a published Annual Statement;
- on processes for characterising and modelling the sedimentary basins of NSW;
- on updating and refining the Risk Management and Prediction Tool;
- on research that needs to be commissioned;
- on the implications of CSG impacts in NSW for planning where CSG activity is permitted to occur in the State;
- on whether shale and tight gas should be allowed to proceed

Recommendation 13 was for a five-part data and analysis program including

- a requirement that companies identify impacts to water resources, their pathways, their consequence and their likelihood, as well as the baseline conditions and their risk trigger thresholds *before activities start*
- a requirement that company monitoring data be provided on the whole-of-government data repository a recommendation that the Government “commission, construct and maintain a variety of models of each region and in particular one that seeks to address cumulative impacts”

Detailed examination of the failure to implement these recommendations are thoroughly examined in submissions already received by the Inquiry.

Part B: responds to part (c) and (d) of the terms of reference:

(c) whether any other inquiry findings or other major reports relating to unconventional gas in Australia or the east coast gas market published since the release of the Chief Scientists are relevant to the suitability or effectiveness of the Chief Scientists recommendations, and

(d) any other related matters.

AACSG&M wishes to make the following observations and to draw the Inquiry’s attention to current publications and presentations which address issues relating to the impacts of Coal Seam Gas activities.

1. Health:

The deleterious impact of Coal Seam Gas production on the physical and mental health of communities is documented and explored in the following presentations which AACSG&M recommends to the Inquiry.

Dr Helen Redmond, Environmental Determinants of Health: Unconventional Gas case study
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DotfrKxVVpk>

Dr Geralyn McCarron, Health Impacts of CSG https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kvfzz7_nbgs

Shay Dougall, Permanent People’s Tribunal representative in a presentation entitled ‘A Perspective on the Gasfield from the Kitchen Table’ delivered to the CSG and Public Health Conference in Narrabri, 15 August 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmjrInxkDhY>

Methuen Morgan, ‘Mental Health concerns for CSG host communities’ a presentation delivered to the CSG and Public Health Conference in Narrabri, 15 August 2018
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDIznfhy7mM>

2. Economic factors:

AACSG&M urges the Inquiry to consider the compelling evidence of the damage being done to key-Australian non-mining industries like agriculture, tourism, manufacturing and education by the gas mining expansion.

AACSG&M urges the Inquiry to closely examine these presentations which were recorded in Coonamble NSW on 13-14 July 2019

- i. **Bruce Robertson - How the Domestic Gas Market in Australia is Developing**
<https://vimeo.com/355221677>
- ii. **Mark Ogge - The Economic Impacts of Unconventional Gas**
<https://vimeo.com/355223804>
- iii. **Nicky Ison - Opportunities to Transition Away from Gas to Clean Energy Sources** <https://vimeo.com/355233967>

AACSG&M urges the Inquiry to consider carefully the findings of the 'Report on the Narrabri Gas Project' by Dr Alistair Davey and Roger Fisher, August 2019, Pegasus Economics.

(https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/lockthegate/pages/6326/attachments/original/1571263720/NGP_Economic_Report_online_version.pdf?1571263720&fbclid=IwAR0SAHD7CQHmnHNTzfwVgCgDbtBSZP4v9DIPcRuKkxwsCxBrS4G82pFr2i0)

3. Waste:

AACSG&M is concerned that the Narrabri Gas Project will produce more than 500,000 toxic salty waste for which Santos has no disposal plan.

4. Water:

The Narrabri Gas Project poses a threat to both the groundwater which sustains farms and communities and the artesian water of the region. The Project is located in the 'recharge area' for Great Artesian Basin from which Santos plans to withdraw 37 billion litres of water. Santos has already been fined for contaminating an aquifer with uranium and other heavy metals and for a spill of 10,000L of waste-water which created a 'dead-zone' which defies remediation.

Conclusion:

As we face the existential threat posed by Climate Change, AACSG&M urges the Inquiry to give voice to the Precautionary Principle and to considerations of intergenerational equity.

Global warming is acknowledged by 61 percent of Australians as 'a serious and pressing problem' (<https://lowyinstitutepoll.lowyinstitute.org/themes/climate-change-and-energy/>).

At this critical time in the fight to limit climate change it is vital that Australia makes a just transition away from fossil fuels toward renewable energy. In the current local context of on-going drought, water crisis and bushfires, AACSG&M urges the Inquiry to request that the NSW Government's assessment process for the Narrabri Gas Project be halted until such time as all the Chief Scientists recommendations are fully implemented and the many other areas of concern are comprehensively addressed.