



**Submission to the NSW Chief Scientist 's Review of CSG -  
CONFIDENTIAL**

**stephanie shoebridge** to: [csg.review@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au](mailto:csg.review@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au) 26/04/2013 12:16 PM  
Cc: "Tony.Burke.MP@aph.gov.au"  
**Please respond to stephanie shoebridge**

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History: This message has been replied to and forwarded.

Dear Professor Mary O'Kane,

Re: Submission to the NSW Chief Scientist's Review of CSG and unconventional gas.

Firstly can I offer my respectful empathy Professor O'Kane, as you navigate your way through this incredible position of responsibility you find yourself in. You, along with Barry O'Farrell and his ministers now have a place in history. On one side of this debate is some of the most powerful multinational fossil fuel companies in the world backed by a revenue hungry State (and Federal) Government with a disastrous track record and an apparent "business at any cost" attitude. And on the other side is the vast majority of citizens who feel abandoned by their Government and now hold deep fears for the future of their state and country and are subsequently being forced to defend their most basic human resources. Indeed, an unprecedented mass movement was born after the NSW community made its assessment of the CSG industry.

But somewhere in that equation is the truth and it is your duty to see beyond the distortions, lies and hidden agendas in order to accurately document it. It seems a daunting responsibility for one person but you can console yourself with the fact that this is all you have to worry about and have no doubt, the truth will reveal itself. However, as you must know, the stakes are incredibly high and Heaven help us all if the truth is somehow compromised.

Thankfully the CSG debate has matured and developed quickly over the past two years and NSW has the opportunity to assess and avoid the damage that Queensland, the USA and other countries have suffered. I suggest a close look at the gasfields of the Western Downs area of QLD especially around Tara / Chinchilla and then calculate the effects of this level of industrialisation spread across more than two thirds of our state.

I strongly urge you, as part of your investigation to consult those people living in and near advanced gas fields in Queensland. Please contact Mr Brian Monk who has been raising awareness of the dangers of this industry ever since his grand children developed neurological disorders. This occurred after their water bore was contaminated at the same time that a nearby CSG well was hydraulically fractured. This well was 3.5 kms from his home which, in terms of buffer zones, means a mere 2 km from residences is clearly inadequate if risks to human health are to be safely avoided. Can science accurately determine what a safe distance is? If the science fails but you are nevertheless forced to make an assessment could I suggest some honest self inquiry to ask yourself how far from a CSG site you would need to be in order to feel safe.

A major question in this issue is why the precautionary principle has been abandoned and why due diligence was not carried out by the State Government before licences were issued and drilling commenced. If the risks are not fully assessed, and clearly they are not as I would not be here having to spend my evening making this submission, then why hasn't the precautionary principle been adopted by the State Government? There are major questions around whether the science of the effects of CSG extraction can in fact be known, at least in the short term. According to Dr Gavin Mudd, the effects on our ground water systems take decades to observe properly. To my knowledge there has been no water, air or health monitoring and no baseline data gathered prior to this industry rolling out. This is viewed by a growing number of people as an act of gross negligence - but the bottom line is, how then can the science be known without baseline data?

There are so many questions to consider in this process and all must be answered satisfactorily before any further drilling is carried out. Questions like: can we sustain the CSG industry's take on our groundwater systems? Can we allow massive amounts of salt, carcinogens, heavy metals and other toxins to leech into our delicate environment? Can we deal with the waste products? What will be the long term effects on our environment, our flora and fauna, our communities and most importantly our sweet water? This is already in incredibly short supply - does anyone have the authority to jeopardise this resource? And what about that monster in the room that is rarely mentioned but is, without doubt, the greatest challenge to yet face humanity - the effects of a rapidly changing climate and our fossil

fuel driven economy. We now have independent scientific research proving what many have believed about the grossly under estimated levels of fugitive emissions. Do we have the science to avoid catastrophic climate change? Do we have the capacity to develop a sustainable clean energy system and curb our carbon footprint? What will be the real cost of this industry rolling out? The proposed scale is enormous so, given the amount of spillages, accidents and negligence we have so far witnessed in the industry's infancy we will naturally have to factor a similar percentage of mishaps as it rolls out. The question is: can these mishaps be remedied? How do you remedy vast networks of fractured substructure 2 kms below the Earth's surface and the associated underground aquifer systems? And what about human health? How are the ill-health effects of Tara residents explained if not by their proximity to the QLD gasfields? Would you yourself risk living in this environment? Have you studied Mariann Lloyd-Smith's research on chemical usage? How does one retrieve the vast amounts of hazardous chemicals used by the industry? How will these toxins affect already threatened plant and animal species. According to many scientists we are already witnessing a mass extinction occurring. Entire evolutionary processes and a huge cross section of species wiped from existence by the hand of man - Is this acceptable and how will another cycle of another fossil fuel effect this mass extinction? It is without doubt a crunch time in human history and only the truth in any given situation and a pure conscience will see us survive this apparent downward spiral.

I imagine you will be bombarded with these sorts of questions as this is widely seen as the biggest potential threat we have ever witnessed to the Australian way life. As a mother of two children, I would happily envisage their future without unconventional gas for the sake of clean water and safe food. But the biggest question to ask is where do you see yourself in this equation Professor? We as a nation rely on truthful, transparent and exacting science but unfortunately we have already seen how the science has been manipulated in this issue and in other issues such as climate change. Yet the truth will not stay hidden in this industry - from all reports it is far too toxic. Again, I have no doubt that the truth will reveal itself - best of luck in discovering and documenting this truth - but heaven help us all if this truth is somehow compromised. Congratulations once again on your place in history. I imagine it is a well earned honour. But please, do not allow yourself to be compromised either way and for the sake of all life, I urge you to ensure you are on the right side of history.

For a sustainable future,

Mrs S. Shoebridge  
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