



Submission re coal seam gas
Hayley Katzen to: csg.review

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History:

This message has been replied to and forwarded.

Attached please find a submission

Many thanks



Hayley Katzen, NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer.docx

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NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer
NSW Government

Wednesday, 27 March 2013

Dear Chief Scientist and Engineer

We are grateful that you are conducting a review of coal seam gas activities in NSW and trust that you will bring an independent mind to this task.

As residents of a rural area called Ewingar which is subject to an application for an Exploration Licence, we are deeply concerned about the impacts of coal seam gas and other unconventional gas mining activities on human health and the environment.

The reason for our concern is that we do not live near a town. We live on a 300 acre rural property and have done so for the last 32 years. We are concerned that because of the low density of our area, we would not have the benefit of the 2km exclusion zone and would therefore be at risk of having coal seam gas activities close to where we live, impacting on our health and our animal's health, our creek from which our stock drink and our environment. We are bewildered and horrified by the thought that the NSW Government would so readily disadvantage and discriminate against country people.

We farm beef cattle. The country on which we depend for our livelihood is unlikely to be classified as 'prime agricultural country'. Nevertheless, by not overstocking our paddocks we are able to make a living, maintain our independence from government benefits and live a sustainable life on solar power and tank water. We are concerned that any coal seam gas activities will reduce our capacity to manage our herd in the way that we do. Recently, we visited farmers in Queensland who were struggling to maintain their farms after pipeline construction caused irreparable damage to their farms and led to loss of income. It seemed that these farmers were being forced to 'share farm' with mining companies who don't understand the needs of stock and crops.

The closest town for us is Casino, an hour away. This is where Metgasco operates. We are deeply concerned about the damage this drilling operation and the power plant will cause to the environment but also what it will do to this small rural town and community.

Recently we went to see what coal seam gas mining is doing to the small towns in rural Queensland. It was depressing to see that supermarkets and local businesses have closed, locals can no longer afford the rents, there is

social division, and social infrastructure has collapsed because there are not enough locals to join voluntary organisations like Rotary and the Fire Brigade. All this because the drive in drive out or fly in fly out approach of energy companies means that money is not brought into the local communities – despite the propaganda put out by these companies. Casino is a town where many people struggle to survive economically. We are really concerned that this will further damage their capacity to survive and live productive lives. And from a purely selfish point of view, we are concerned what will happen to the prices and availability of rural supplies if our local businesses find it impossible to continue.

Despite the proposed policies to regulate the industry, we are concerned that this decision ignores the widespread opposition to coal seam gas mining. In our small area a survey revealed 97% of residents oppose coal seam gas mining. Even the Clarence Valley Council has set limits in a recent resolution. This shows the opposition in this area as does the fact that 87% of residents in the Lismore LGA voted against coal seam gas in the Lismore LGA.

We're particularly concerned that the ban on fracking has been lifted and the industry has been given the green light. The lessons of Queensland show that as a result of this industry, our landscape, farmlands, roads and towns will become industrialised mining towns bringing pollution and health impacts. We lack the scientific data and experience to appreciate the long-term consequences of this technique.

We urge you to appreciate that it is wiser to prevent the damage caused by this industry, rather than waiting to see it happen so that you have 'scientific proof'. As yet in NSW we can't offer you the evidence – but it is there for you to see in Queensland and other jurisdictions. It seems hasty and unwise to give the go ahead to an industry which has failed to prove itself safe in all other jurisdictions.

A few months ago, Metgasco flouted conditions by dumping wastewater into Casino's sewage treatment plant and was forced to comply only after protesters brought the authorities attention to this. Based on this experience we are deeply concerned that the NSW Government's regulatory guidelines are only policies not legislation and therefore lack any mandatory power. We are also doubtful of who will police their compliance.

We urge you to reconsider the hasty approval of this industry, to protect those of us who live in country areas, to protect our waterways and our rural environments and stop it before it's too late for us all.

Thank you

Hayley Katzen and Jennifer Lewis