



Public Health Impacts of CSG extraction Tara QLD Gas Field

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Please respond to Pete NoCSG Tyler

History: This message has been replied to and forwarded.

Dear NSW Chief Scientist and Dr Richards

This is not really a late submission to your review but an important piece of research just published for your review. As public officials you must not ignore the growing body of evidence regarding the health effects of living in a gas field. Dr Richards, I request that you take this matter to Health Ministers. It is time for national public health legislation.

PETER TYLER

Symptomatology of a gas field - An independent health survey in the Tara rural residential estates and environs
Dr GERALYN McCARRON, Castle Hill Medical Centre, Brisbane

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/lockthegate/pages/49/attachments/original/1367333672/2013-04-symptomatology_of_a_gas_field_GERALYN_McCARRON.pdf?1367333672

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents an investigation during February and March 2013 by a concerned General Practitioner, in relation to health complaints by people living in close proximity to coal seam gas development in SW Queensland.

Thirty-five households in the Tara residential estates and the Kogan/Montrose region were surveyed in person and telephone interviews were conducted with three families who had left the area. Information was collected on 113 people from the 38 households. Of these, 17 were children 5 years of age or less, 31 were children aged between 6 and 18, and 65 were adults aged between 19 and 82. 58% of residents surveyed reported that their health was definitely adversely affected by CSG, whilst a further 19% were uncertain. The pattern reported was outside the scope of what would be expected for a small rural community. In all age groups there were reported increases in cough, chest tightness, rashes, difficulty sleeping, joint pains, muscle pains and spasms, nausea and vomiting. Approximately one third of the people over 6 years of age were reported to have spontaneous nose bleeds, and almost three quarters were reported to have skin irritation. Over half of children were reported to have eye irritation.

A range of symptoms were reported which can sometimes be related to neurotoxicity (damage to the nervous system), including severe fatigue, weakness, headaches, numbness and paraesthesia (abnormal sensations such as pins and needles, burning or tingling). Approximately a third of the all the 48 children to age 18 (15/48) were reported to experience paraesthesia. Almost all the 31 children aged 6-18 were reported to suffer from headaches and for over half of these the headaches were severe. Of people aged 6 years and over, severe fatigue and difficulty concentrating was reported for over half. Parents of a number of young children reported twitching or unusual movements, and clumsiness or unsteadiness.

This unfunded study is limited in terms of what can be concluded and does not claim to be without methodological problems. However what it does do is highlight the basis for serious concerns of the residents and the need for the Queensland government to fund a comprehensive epidemiological investigation of the problem.

No baseline air or water monitoring or baseline health studies were done prior to the

Queensland Government permitting the widespread development of the CSG industry in close proximity to family homes. No ongoing health study or surveillance and no ongoing testing to monitor chronic exposure levels is in place. This is clearly unacceptable.

The rural residential estates near Tara are the most densely settled area in Australia to have seen intensive CSG development. Since 2008, the people of these estates have informed successive Queensland Governments of their health problems. Their reports of ill health have been trivialised and ignored. The recent report released by the Queensland Government following their investigation into the health impacts near Tara was so inadequate and flawed that it has done little to alleviate concerns.

The Queensland government undertook minimal non-systematic environmental sampling, and relied mainly on inadequate industry commissioned data. The investigation of patient symptoms was grossly underfunded and understaffed, with no medical staff actually visiting the site. Only 15 people were examined clinically. Positive findings of volatile chemicals were dismissed, despite the fact they are potentially capable of causing health impacts, especially over long periods of time.

The state government must take its responsibility for the health of these citizens seriously, and the federal government must develop federal legislation to protect public health from CSG impacts.

Recommendations are:

- 1) A fully funded comprehensive medical assessment of residents currently living in proximity to unconventional gas development should be carried out as a matter of urgency.
- 2) The planning and urgent implementation of fully funded, long term epidemiological studies is essential to track the health of people exposed to CSG over the next several decades. This must include workers in the industry as well as people who may already have left the area because of health concerns.
- 3)

Health impact assessments must be an integral part of any and every unconventional gas development. No new permit should be issued without one, and health impact assessments should be carried out for every development already in place.

4)

Comprehensive air and water monitoring (an open, ongoing and unlimited information loop) is essential. If we are looking at possible non beneficial human health impacts we need to look at all the gases and volatiles both natural and derived emitted via well drilling, gas and pipeline valves, leaking wellheads, flaring, and other processes involved in gas collection/purification/refining to export specifications. This monitoring is urgently required. It must be independent, unbiased, fully funded and available for public scrutiny preferably in real time and in electronic form.

5) Gas companies must be required to fully and openly disclose in a timely manner, all chemicals, and all quantities of chemicals, used or planned to be used for drilling, fracking, cleaning, dehydration, and other processes at every gas facility. All historical results they have of analyses of air, soil and water should be available for public scrutiny.

6)

The federal government must develop legislation, a unified standard, to protect public

health across Australia from the impacts of unconventional gas development and other extractive industries.

7)

There must be open, fully informed, public debate on the future of the unconventional gas industry in Australia.