



Submission

Fuller, Sharon (R. Oakeshott, MP)

To: 'csg.review@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au'

26/04/2013 05:07 PM

History:

This message has been replied to and forwarded.

Good afternoon,

Please find attached a submission from Rob Oakeshott, Federal Member for Lyne, to the Chief Scientist and Engineer on the impacts of CSG activities, as per the independent review now underway.

Kind regards,
Sharon

Sharon Fuller

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Oakeshott submission NSW Chief Scientist.pdf



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26 April 2013

Professor Mary O'Kane
NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer
Email: csg.review@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au

Dear Prof O'Kane,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your review of coal-seam gas activities in the state of New South Wales.

As a federal parliamentarian, it is not my intention, or within my expertise, to provide you with the scientific evidence to support a ban on CSG projects, particularly in the Gloucester valley which is part of my electorate.

However, as a federal parliamentarian it is within my job description to communicate to you the widespread community opposition to CSG-related activities in and around Gloucester.

For five years now there has been overwhelming opposition to AGL's proposed 330 coal-seam gas wells in the Gloucester Valley.

The community's overriding concern is the unknown impact of mining activities, including coal-seam gas extraction, on the valley's underground and surface water resources.

The AGL project was approved by the previous NSW Government during the caretaker period prior to the March 2011 state election. This approval was granted without any consultation with the water supply authority, MidCoast Water, or with downstream water users in the Manning Valley, where a population of more than 80,000 residents are reliant on clean drinking water.

My community does not understand how CSG developments can be approved without due consideration given to the amenity of a town like Gloucester, the potential impact mining activities will have on one of Gloucester's biggest economic contributors – tourism, and the potential for waterways and groundwater to be polluted. This is a valley which has tremendous agricultural assets, and yet these assets are being placed at risk so a new industry – whose impact on human health and the environment is not yet known - can be developed.

The state's peak body representing farmers, the NSW Farmers Association, is critical of the NSW strategic land use policy, describing it as a green light for exploration and mining right across the state.

And the NSW Irrigators Council says it's "profoundly disappointed" with the state's aquifer interference policy.

It says the rules proposed in the draft policy were inadequate because too many exemptions could be applied, but the final policy is far worse because now "we don't have any rules, just guidelines".

The policies fail to protect water and productive farm lands from the enthusiasm of the current CSG boom because they fail to quarantine any part of NSW, regardless of its agricultural or environmental value, from CSG drilling and coal mining.

The most lucrative CSG and coal deposits in NSW happen to occur in the same regions that are our most productive in terms of agriculture and tourism.

Even water catchments have not been ruled off limits.

The legitimate concerns of many thousands of NSW residents about the potential impacts of fracking on groundwater supplies, the potential impact of extraction on productive lands and on surface water, have largely been ignored.

NSW moved to renew 22 drilling licences covering 5 million hectares last year, including one in the Pilliga Forest despite it being under investigation for environmental damage and soil and water contamination.

Farmers' interests, and the interests of those who consume their produce, have taken a back seat to the might of the mining sector.

In Australia groundwater accounts for around 20 per cent of the country's total water use, and the majority of it is used for agricultural purposes, such as crop irrigation.

More than 40 per cent of the NSW population either fully or partially relies on groundwater, including about 200 towns that use groundwater as their principal water supply.

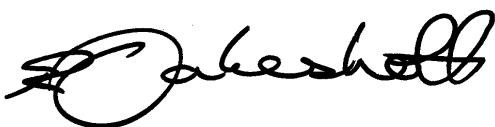
If NSW gets this policy wrong, the potential cost to the community won't just be measured in terms of lost agricultural opportunities.

I have no doubt the scientific, technical and medical evidence presented during this submission process will be carefully considered.

The purpose of my submission is to remind you that until such time that we have conclusive scientific data ruling out any potential health and environmental impacts from CSG activities, we have a collective responsibility to adopt the precautionary principle.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in your review.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Oakeshott', written in a cursive style.

**ROBERT OAKESHOTT MP
MEMBER FOR LYNE**

Ro:sf