



Submission to Review of coal seam gas in NSW

Jo to: csg.review

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History:

This message has been replied to and forwarded.

Dear Chief Scientist

I am extremely concerned that the coal seam gas industry in NSW has hitherto been allowed to expand too rapidly without adequate environmental monitoring.

In particular, I am worried that the industry simply has insufficient knowledge of, and has done inadequate research into, the potential to catastrophically affect groundwater quality. Once some miscalculation occurs and groundwater is polluted nothing can be done to un-pollute it, and that is an enormous risk which seems to be being treated in a rather cavalier fashion. They claim with great confidence that groundwater isn't at risk, but don't seem to have adequate data to back up such a claim. There would seem to be numerous instances where they get it wrong, and nearby farms suddenly find that their bore water has become undrinkable (or, indeed, flammable). This sort of miscalculation on a larger scale is frightening; what if they pollute a really large aquifer?

We are being asked to embrace the coal seam gas industry because it is so much cleaner than coal in terms of its greenhouse gas emissions, but I strongly suspect that the only reason the industry can make such a claim is because a significant proportion of the emissions which they are adding to the atmosphere are simply not being taken into account. Fugitive emissions of methane have simply never been counted, it's as if they didn't exist. However, once these emissions are properly monitored and fully taken into account, it may well be that the CSG industry is no 'cleaner' than coal, particularly given the fact that in the short term methane is so much more potent a greenhouse gas than CO₂.

It also worries me that CSG wells are being allowed to proliferate at the expense of good farming land, because in the final analysis we are going to need farming land a lot more than we need another fossil fuel. With the appropriate investment, our energy needs could be met in alternative ways that would do a lot less overall harm to the environment, but we will always need to produce food. It is extremely short-sighted to be sacrificing this land, particularly since some of our current farming land further south is predicted to become less productive into the future as these areas of the continent become drier.

Yours sincerely
Joanna Leoni

PS I have a question. Why on earth are we investing so much money into extracting yet another fossil fuel when we apparently are on track for 5 degrees of warming by the end of this century?

I can only imagine that the politicians who seem so completely unconcerned about this projection don't really have much of a clue about what this actually means in real terms - can we possibly hope that scientists in the near future will be trying to make sure that both the politicians and the general population get a clearer picture of what a 5 degree warmer world would actually be like?