

04-04-2013
Victoria

Re: Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Bill 2013
[Provisions]

To whom it may concern:

I have been following the story of unconventional coal seam gas mining for about two years now, in spite of working overseas. I am a biologist by profession so understand very well the interconnected nature of the environment and also how limited our understanding is of non-linear systems such as the ecosystem. I believe in data-driven decision making in all areas of life, most especially in government and have been regularly disgusted by the furious dash of political figures to approve of CSG projects based, if appears, entirely on the perceived but not actual financial benefits of said projects, over and above the well-being of stakeholders and the long-term benefits of our rural communities; now the proof of malfeasance and incompetence is in the bag, with reports of inadequate state government oversight and regulation of the industry. With all this in mind, I would like to submit the following points to the aforementioned enquiry:

1. The Bill is strongly supported by the community, with recent polls showing 75% of people against CSG. I would therefore expect to see it passed quickly through the Senate.
2. I am very pleased that the bilateral approval provisions of the EPBC Act cannot apply to coal and coal seam gas developments that impact on water resources and that there have been some improvements to the exemptions.
3. I want to ensure that the exemptions contained in the Bill are minimized, specifically that key projects, such as the Arrow Coal Seam Gas project in Queensland and Camden in western Sydney, are not exempt from it. Therefore, I would still like to see minor amendments to remove s22 2b) and d).
4. I emphasize that there are other amendments that would substantially improve the Bill, that should be developed in the future, such as:
 - Amending the Bill to cover all unconventional fossil fuel mining, including shale gas and tight gas, and unconventional coal mining.
 - Strengthening the role of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee and ensuring that committee members are truly independent of the fossil fuel industry, including such provisions as a ban on accepting or having held positions with any fossil fuel or mining company within 5 years of being a committee member.
 - Clearly defining significant impacts on water resources, with mandatory bore- and ground-testing to at least five times the distance from the most extreme radius of direct mining activities.
 - Establishing a set of requirements that the Minister must ensure are met when considering water resource impacts of mining projects.
 - Including a requirement for bioregional assessments prior to approval of new projects; consideration of individual project impacts in isolation is clearly

insufficient, considering recent reports of the cumulative effects of fracking on aquifers in Queensland by multiple projects.

The Australian people are not impressed with the efforts made so far to ensure that our beautiful and environmentally diverse country is being safeguarded by the Commonwealth Government, which seems to be more interested in finding ways to turn our land into a huge mining pit. We need to support our small farmers, tourism operators, local business and individuals far more than we will ever need to make it easier for big businesses to pillage our land for its finite resources.

Mining produces nothing: it merely moves resources around, using infrastructure that is degraded in the process, which is paid for by the taxpayer. It deserves no subsidies, no assistance, no future; it is in no way sustainable or renewable, no matter what cock-eyed definitions might be given to various outcomes of the process by bureaucrats. It costs us our health, our environment and our future, while exporting profits to multi-national companies whose statutory responsibilities are only to the bottom line of the next quarterly statement.

I hope my submission is of some help in guiding your deliberations.

Sincerely,

Clem Stanyon, PhD.