

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia

Environment and Property Protection Association (EPPA)  
Kensington Park  
49 Leahys Road  
Dalby QLD 4405  
Australia

Thursday, 4 March 2010

Senate,

Many landholders have experienced a significant reduction in their property rights and asset values in recent years. Native vegetation laws have seen vast tracks of grazing country tied up in an ever-decreasing state of productivity. If native vegetation laws had been implemented with regard for existing land owners productivity, many people would be in a much better financial state than they are today. It is totally unfair to expect one section of the community to bear the full cost of greenhouse gas abatement measures when the whole Australian community will benefit.

Land clearing needed to be stopped until a sustainable management plan could be produced. This plan should have provided compensation for loss of income and included a management plan so that sustainable production/grazing could occur while protecting tree species and meeting the greenhouse gas abatement requirements. Landholders should be employed as custodians of these areas to control weeds, sucker growth and feral animals. Regional natural resource management (NRM) groups should be involved in developing sustainable management plans and independent valuers should be employed to determine compensation arrangements in conjunction with NRM groups.

The EPPA has very serious concerns about the impact on their property rights from the coal seam gas (CSG) industry. This industry is in its infancy but is almost running out of control as government legislation is struggling to keep pace with expansion. Landholders are seeing their properties turned into industrial mining sites and have little ability to protect their profitability and lifestyle. The mining industry appears to have all the rights at the expense of landholders.

The dewatering of coal seam measures is very concerning as there is enough evidence to suggest that shallow aquifers will be drained. These shallow aquifers are the lifeblood of towns, intensive livestock industries and irrigators and the long term ramifications of losing this valuable asset are causing a great deal of distress in rural areas. Salt is also produced as a by-product of CSG extraction and, to date, no real management plan has been developed to remove this from the environment. This salt has the potential to contaminate groundwater, surface water and grazing and cropping lands. If this happens, vast tracks of agricultural land in Queensland and throughout Australia will become unproductive and valueless.

The Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Parsons Brinckerhoff Coal Seam Gas Water Management Study NRO0011, 2004 identifies several potential damaging impacts that dewatering of the coal measures could have on shallow aquifers.

The report does little to prove that groundwater will not be affected, rather it states that there is a serious lack of knowledge surrounding the modelling and analysis of the groundwater system.

Section 6.4 – Potential groundwater impacts states:

*“Indirect impact to shallow groundwater resources cannot be defined at this stage due to lack of site-specific data relating to CSG groundwater extraction and dedicated groundwater monitoring”; and*

*“Recovery of the coal seam aquifers after production ends is a slow process involving recharge from undrained areas of the aquifer, infiltration of precipitation from the surface in areas where the coal seams outcrop and the slow process of infiltration from aquifers above and below the produced coal seams”*

Section 6.4.1 – Predictive groundwater modelling states:

*“However what is consistent in every development area is the need to understand the groundwater process in order to confidently identify the magnitude of groundwater impact due to water extraction from CSG production”*

A moratorium should be placed on CSG extraction in the short term until science has caught up with the industry and developed a sustainable way of extracting the gas without destroying the very valuable groundwater systems.

I do not believe the science is proven that CO<sub>2</sub> is heating the world. Climate change sceptics are providing information that disputes the global warming and climate change theory. The climate has been changing forever, and does not appear to be any different now. We must take care of the world and not pollute it, but we must not rush headlong into a flawed scheme that will cost billions of dollars and make Australia uncompetitive in the world market.

History has shown that we have done a poor job of managing our natural resources. Now is the time to ensure that any future industries do not have short- and long-term unintended negative impacts on the environment, landholders and the communities that rely on them.

Sincerely,

Ian Hayllor  
Chair, EPPA