

Dear Senators,

Re: Senate Inquiry into the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Bill 2013 [Provisions]

New laws to protect our water from the adverse effects of Coal Seam Gas and large Coal Mining ventures have passed the House of Representatives. I encourage you to bring these new laws to the Senate, so they can be passed before the next federal election.

Groundwater is very important to the people of the Greater Newcastle Area as it is one of the primary water supplies to the city - from the Tomago Sand beds. Ground water drains into our rivers which provide drinking water to Newcastle via the Grahamstown Dam. The Williams and Hunter rivers are also used for fishing and prawning as well as recreational swimming and boating. Pollution of the ground water from Coal Seam Gas mining and open cut coal mining will pollute the fish and prawns that we eat - and that are an important source of income in this region. It may have an adverse effect on the health of people who boat and swim on the rivers.

I have family who are farmers (cattle, cropping, lucerne) in areas that will be affected by coal mining and coal seam gas mining. Coal seam gas mining will pollute the ground water which is so vital to their livelihoods. Ground water is used to provide drinking water via bores for the cattle that will eventually end up on our dinner plates. It is also used to irrigate crops that will provide food for the cattle, and wheat for our flour. Coal seam gas mining could introduce toxins into all of our food chain.

The horse industry in the Upper Hunter may also be affected via the same process. This horse industry is also an important part of the economy as horse racing provides substantial income to the government. Also the local regions economy would suffer greatly if the horse industry was no longer active in the region.

I don't know if there has been any research into these possible effects. Unfortunately the way research is likely to be done is after the event i.e. measuring the pollution of our water and food supplies after the coal seam gas mining has happened and (necessarily) after open cut coal mining has occurred. This is "closing the gate after the horse has bolted." So just because there is no evidence of harm from these activities - because the research hasn't been done - doesn't mean they are safe. It is better to be safe than sorry. Surely the health of our community is more important than the profits of big mining. We have the technology for alternative forms of energy which are clean and safe. We should be putting our emphasis and money towards developing these technologies.

I believe it is important to strengthen these new protections for our environment and to keep these new powers in federal hands, because of the poor environmental track record of state governments especially the current O'Farrell state government in NSW.

Please - send this important legislation to the senate in the current sitting. And please vote to protect our environment - and ultimately ourselves - from the toxins produced by coal seam gas mining and large open cut coal mining.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Tracie Hendriks