

3 April 2013
Federal Parliament
Canberra

SUBMISSION TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION ACT

Submission points:

1. The Bill is strongly supported and we would like to see it passed quickly through the Senate.
2. We are 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. We want to ensure that the exemptions contained in the Bill are minimised, and that key projects, such as the Arrow Coal Seam Gas project in Queensland and Camden in Western Sydney, are not exempt from it. Therefore, we would still like to see minor amendments to remove s22 2b) and d).
4. We recognize that there are other amendments that would substantially improve the Bill, that may be required in the future, such as:

- Amending the Bill to cover all unconventional gas mining, including shale gas and tight gas, and unconventional coal mining
- Strengthening the role of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee
- Defining significant impacts on water resources
- Introducing a set of requirements for the Minister to consider when making decisions on water resource impacts
- Including a requirement for bioregional assessments prior to approval

Acting on the precautionary principle as outlined in international treaties to which Australia is a signatory, is not only advisable, it is commensurate with our international pledges and commitments. We no longer have time to stall ecologically sound initiatives through political wrangling that delay taking the obvious and important precautions against ecological devastations that will only eventuate in outcomes that are not only destructive for ecological habitats, but for our overall human and economic survival.

We will all congratulate historically the Governments that have taken brave and important steps toward protection of the ecological systems that sustain life. Thank you for your time and consideration of this submission.

Yours faithfully

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