

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry into the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Bill 2013.

As someone who is concerned about the boom in the unconventional gas industry in Australia, I welcome any moves for stronger environmental regulations. Up and down the east coast of Australia, and indeed around the world, farmers and rural communities are expressing concern about the impacts of hydraulic fracturing, for example, on their land as part of the unconventional gas extraction process.

I would like to see the Bill amended to ensure that significant projects such as Arrow Coal Seam Gas in Qld and Camden in NSW are not exempt.

Significantly, as a resident of the Northern Territory who holds grave concerns about the threat posed by the shale oil and gas industry (which currently seeks to explore about 90% of the NT), I would urge the inquiry to recommend the bill cover all unconventional gas mining – i.e. including shale and tight – rather than just coal seam gas mining. While there are differences between shale and CSG, such as depth and therefore proximity to underground water, many of the procedures are similar, as are the dangers: methane leakage, contamination through cracked well heads, and many other well-known concerns.

I also urge that the Bill be significantly strengthened to ensure “significant impacts on water resources” is adequately defined, and that a set of requirements be developed for the minister to adhere to when making decisions about water resource impacts. The serious allegations aired on ABC’s Four Corners indicate that provisions requiring the industry to “self-report” any potential risks to water sources will fall dangerously short of what we need to protect prime farming and water catchment areas.

Regards

Emma Murphy