

4/4/2013

Submission

Re: Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Bill 2013

Summary: Amends the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to: create a matter of national environmental significance for coal seam gas and large coal mining developments which are likely to have a significant impact on a water resource; and establish penalties and offences to prohibit such action.

I support the Federal Government having more control where impacts are possibly made on our water resources. Baseline studies need to be made so when changes are reported, companies cannot just say that's how it has always been and we've made no impacts. Our industry is safe because we say it is, so it couldn't have been us.

Water is not contained by fencelines or state boundaries and needs national oversight.

We are known as a dry country and water is lifeblood to the country. We need to know exactly what we are doing to our water resources, that's right water is a resource that we need more than coal or gas.

It appears that mining and coal seam gas companies can state she'll be right mate and hopefully get away with any adverse effects that they had hoped would not occur, either because they underestimated risk or ignored risk or didn't even think of the risk.

We need to have a national strategy with the power to enforce proper monitoring and analysis of interconnectedness so we can assess the total effects geological and hydrological interference. Even small interferences which may appear insignificant can accumulate to monumental effects. It only takes one step to start a giant journey, only one straw to break the camel's back and the total is greater than the sum of the individual effects.

Hydroregional areas need to be used in assessments and not only surface water but down to include underground flows to 3,7,9 ...??.....kilometres underground. We need more than "we don't think there will be impacts", we need proof that there won't be impacts. Difficult yes, but if we can't have guarantees then we need more baseline data before we even think about going ahead on a project. Assessments also need to be on combinations of projects and not projects in isolation.

Permits need to be able to be able to be restricted where possible where future evidence of adverse effects to water resources may appear. Is there a truly independent body that can monitor effects?

Is there a scheme that would encourage companies to be more accountable? Testing and monitoring data should be made readily accessible to the public. The gas and coal and water are public property, so we the public should have a right to know what others are doing to our property. It is a companies responsibility to us to inform us in a timely manner if we are to allow them to impact our landscape by mining in any manner.

We should not just be limited to coal seam gas and coal mining we should include any form of mining eg shale gas etc.

Are there lists of requirements (but not limited to those requirements alone) that are deemed essential to be referred to when making decisions on water impacts?

The word "significant" needs to be better defined as what is significant to a user may be totally insignificant to another party. How easy is it for someone to say "I didn't think that was significant

and even if I did think it was significant I didn't think it likely." Is a change of flow direction significant? Is adding any amount of toxin where there was none before significant? Does it become significant if it kills animals plants or people? Is it significant if it only causes irritation in animals plants or humans?

Our water, our future let's protect it, penalties will not bring it back.

Mick Barker