

Submission for Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Bill 2013

I believe that this Bill goes a long way in protecting water and communities from the dangers of CSG but it needs several amendments before it goes through the Senate. This Bill needs to be passed immediately, without delay and with these following adjustments:

All of these amendments need to be made permanently and not have any possibility of State & Local Government given exemptions or the ability to 'opt out'. (See last sub-title)

Clean water is our right. Without it there is no food, no life and no hope for many of us.

The role of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee needs to be strengthened.

All reports need to define significant impacts on water resources. Introduce a set of requirements for the Minister to consider when making decisions on water resource impacts and include a requirement for bioregional assessments prior to approval.

Ensure that the exemptions contained in the Bill are minimised, and that key projects, such as the Arrow Coal Seam Gas project in Qld 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) if possible.

Protecting communities where CSG and coal has already been approved

These new laws should apply to all projects approved after February 13 this year.

Three big New South Wales project approvals were rushed through on February 14 – Gloucester coal seam gas and Maules Creek and Boggabri coalmines, these have not started yet, so it is not too late for their approvals to be revisited and for the water impacts of these massive projects to be properly assessed.

We want all coal seam gas and large coal mining projects approved since Minister Burke became the Environment Minister to have their water impacts assessed by this stricter criteria and a review of EIS submitted to the Queensland Government in the last 2 years to inform decision makers about the water impacts of developments that have been approved and avert possible environmental catastrophes.

This is incredibly important, in light of recent revelations of the effects of CSG on health and underground water.

Independent baseline studies need to be conducted on all projects before any more projects are approved. So a moratorium would be in place while these protocols are developed as they don't seem to exist at the moment.

Landholders right to say no

Protect landholders and communities from coal seam gas and large coal mining, we need to give landholders the right to say no to coal seam gas and large coal mining projects on their land as per The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 17.

Exclusion Zones

No CSG on Prime Agricultural Land or near a residence (even 5km is not enough).

No CSG in or near Heritage areas (this includes the Great Barrier Reef, disgustingly, currently under threat from CSG related industry).

No CSG where we have threatened species or in high-conservation value areas.

Make the laws apply to other forms of coal and gas

The new water protection laws don't apply to shale gas, tight gas, and underground coal gasification and this needs to be remedied as they are just as bad. These forms of mining also threaten water resources – it makes sense that these new protections apply to them as well.

Stop the hand off of all federal approval powers

The proposed new laws should not allow the Environment Minister to hand the responsibility to protect water from coal seam gas and large coal mining back to the State Governments or Local Governments.

These new laws need to be passed through the Senate before the next election.

The community demands it.

In good faith that this submission will be considered,

Johanna Evans & Sean Mackie