

**Submission to  
The Environment and Communications  
Legislation Committee**

Submission from  
Doctors for the Environment Australia Inc.  
David Shearman, Hon Secretary  
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The following are members of our Scientific Committee and support the work of  
Doctors for the Environment Australia

Prof. Stephen Boyden AM; Prof. Peter Doherty AC; Prof. Bob Douglas AO; Prof. Michael Kidd AM;  
Prof. David de Kretser AC; Prof. Stephen Leeder AO; Prof. Ian Lowe AO; Prof. Robyn McDermott;  
Prof. Tony McMichael AO; Prof. Peter Newman; Prof. Emeritus Sir Gustav Nossal AC; Prof. Hugh Possingham;  
Prof. Lawrie Powell AC; Prof. Fiona Stanley AC; Dr Rosemary Stanton OAM; Dr Norman Swan;  
Professor David Yencken AO

Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) are a national, independent public health, non government organisation of medical doctors. We educate on and work for a safe and healthy environment.

DEA made a comprehensive submission on the health aspects of coal seam gas mining to the Management of the Murray Darling Basin Senate Enquiry [http://dea.org.au/images/uploads/submissions/MDB\\_CSG\\_Senate\\_submission\\_June\\_2011.pdf](http://dea.org.au/images/uploads/submissions/MDB_CSG_Senate_submission_June_2011.pdf). We appeared before the Committee.

We commend the Senate on its report.

DEA welcomes the Government's decision to appoint an interim committee of experts to provide independent scientific advice on coal seam gas and coal mining. Impacts of these industries on water resources are of concern to both the public and the scientific community.

However if the aim is as stated "a new science-based framework to provide more certainty for regional communities around coal seam gas and large coal mining developments" we feel that a major aspect of scientific input is missing, namely that relating to human health. "Science" should include all relevant branches of science including medical science.

In our experience in working with communities, their main concern about these industries relates to short and long term health impacts, and that impacts on water resources ultimately translate into potential health impacts, either directly or indirectly. In addition, there are other potential health impacts of mining coal and coal seam gas that are unrelated to water resources. For example, communities have raised with us the question of local air pollution near to the well heads in CSG mining areas. In coal mining regions there is concern about long term pollution of local water resources from open cast coal mining operations. In our view, the necessary research and investigation of these problems to protect the public health is not available.

Therefore we believe that the initiative to establish the Expert Committee will fail to bring confidence to communities if the human health implications are not addressed.

We therefore request that the legislation include the need for:

- (1) Public health representation on the Interim Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Coal Mining Development. The terms of reference should be widened to include such medical representation.
- (2) The legislation should not impose confidentiality on medical issues. It is necessary that public confidence be restored in coal seam gas mining and in open cast coal mining and the medical issues and their solutions should be addressed in a transparent way.