

Submission re Senate Inquiry into the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Bill 2013 [Provisions]

Water is crucial for any society's well being and future. In Australia, one of the driest land masses in the world, our water is particularly valuable. Our Artesian Basin is of vital importance for many reasons and needs to be protected at all costs.

The Coal Seam Gas industry which seems to have taken off with a bang recently is a real threat to our water systems. Not only the Artesian Basin but every river and creek and water catchment area where this industry is happening is in danger of either pollution, being greatly reduced or even disappearing. Personally, I would like to see the extraction of coal seam gas suspended in our country altogether until it is proven without reasonable doubt that there is no danger to people's health, the environment and water. I really believe that the gas and mining companies have too much power over governments and are mainly concerned about dollars rather than the good of the country. It's all very well to talk of the economic benefits but many of these are short term gain for long term loss.

However, being a realist, I understand that suspending coal seam gas extraction is not going to happen, though it would be absolutely wonderful to see a government and or governments being brave and taking a chance to look after the country. Money is the all important factor in this issue and if this industry in particular is to proceed, then the strictest regulations need to be put in place. The NSW Government has made a start but the regulations really only protect city and urban peoples. The rural areas are not protected enough and will still be collateral damage if this industry goes ahead as planned. There are also loopholes in the Strategic Land Use Policy which still makes it hard for landholders to have any say over what happens on their properties.

To quote "These proposed new laws will require the Environment Minister to take into account the water impacts of coal seam gas and large coal mining when assessing those projects for approval. This will enable the Minister to refuse such projects if the water impacts are too great, or impose conditions to protect water resources from coal seam gas and coal mining" I would encourage the government to bring these laws to the Senate so they can be passed before the election.

I also believe that not all the power should be given to the states in this matter but that the Federal Government should retain powers to intervene and prevent total destruction like that which is currently happening in Queensland. There was a slogan a few years back about Queensland which should now be: "Perfect one day; ruined the next."

I actually despair for our beautiful country, not only for my grandchildren but for the generations to come. We are on the path of destruction with all the mining activities that are taking place all over our land. Regeneration just does not happen when a huge hole in the ground has been left after the resources from it are finished or when our water table, rivers, creeks and water catchments are polluted or gone altogether. It's time to listen to communities who value their places of abode and their environments. If the little people can see what is happening all around them with the destruction of the land and depletion and pollution of our water, why can't the big guys? We still lucky enough to have some wonderful bushland and wildlife left that is unique in the world. Let's make sure we have something left for the future.

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