

4th April 2013

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Submissions to Senate Inquiry into the Federal Government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Bill 2013 [Provisions]

I am very concerned by the recent revelations in Queensland (Four Corners, 1st April) of the weak, nonsensical environmental impact assessments undertaken by industry and supported by the then State Government. The lack of accountability and transparency relating to these two particular Coal Seam Gas Projects is absolutely mind blowing. How can the public be expected to trust in these processes if they are blatantly ignored and undermined by the actual Governments of the day who are employed by the people to act on our behalf to enforce laws and regulations that aim to safe guard and protect our natural environments, agricultural lands, water resources, OUR HEALTH.

Please note the following points:

It is good that the bilateral approval provisions of the EPBC Act cannot apply to coal and coal seam gas developments that impact on water resources, and that there have been some improvements to the exemptions.

Please ensure that the exemptions contained in the Bill are minimised, and that key projects, such as the Arrow Coal Seam Gas project in Queensland and Camden in western Sydney, are not exempt from it. Therefore, I would still like to see minor amendments to remove s22 2b) and d).

I recognize that there are other amendments that would substantially improve the Bill and may be required in the future, such as:

- Amending the Bill to cover all unconventional gas mining, including shale gas and tight gas, and unconventional coal mining
- Strengthening the role of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee
- Defining significant impacts on water resources
- Introducing a set of requirements for the Minister to consider when making decisions on water resource impacts
- Including a requirement for bioregional assessments prior to approval

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the Committee's inquiry. I implore the committee to look strongly and with conviction at the long term impacts of this Amendment Bill on the Australian Society, it's environment, food security and the long term health and sustainability of this country as a whole.

Regards

Vicki Godfrey