

3rd April 2013

Submission to the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Bill 2013 [Provisions]

I commend all those who have collaborated for these important amendments to the EP&BC Act and support its speedy endorsement by the Senate. I strongly support the Bill.

I am extremely concerned about risks to water systems resulting from unconventional gas mining and coal mine expansions. Water is our most precious resource. Open cut and longwall coal mines pose significant risks, as does the rapid expansion of coal seam gasfields over the Great Artesian Basin and other important aquifers. The Condamine River at the headwaters of the Murray-Darling is bubbling methane as it passes through the Tara-Chinchilla gasfield.

The need for federal powers to protect water assets is undeniable. Rapid expansion of coal seam gas mining has been permitted by the states without adequate baseline air and water testing, without sufficient independent research, and without a robust regulatory system independent of industry. The recent ABC Four Corners program on the rushed approvals process for massive CSG development in Queensland underlines the importance of these amendments. In this driest of continents, the Great Artesian Basin, our aquifers and river systems are of critical importance.

My comments on the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Bill 2013 [Provisions] are:

1. I support the Bill's speedy endorsement by the Senate
2. I particularly appreciate that the bilateral approval provisions of the EPBC Act cannot apply to coal and coal seam gas developments that impact on water resources.
3. It is important that the Bill is not weakened by exemptions.
4. It is especially important that projects such as the Arrow project in Queensland, and the Camden project in NSW are not exempt. For this reason I would like to see a minor amendment to remove s22 2b) and d).

Australia is witnessing rapid expansion of untested technologies for extracting hard-to-get-at fossil fuels with landscape-wide impacts. For this reason, in the future this Bill will require amendment to cover all unconventional gas extraction such as Shale, Tight Gas, and Underground Coal Gasification. However, in the current context, it is critical that the current Bill is passed soon, with the minor amendment to limit exemptions for Camden and the Qld Arrow projects.

Yours Sincerely,

Annie Kia