



Gilgandra Shire Council
meeting community needs

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

25 JUL 2011

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Contact: Randall Medd

(RM)

21 July 2011

Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee
Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing
Committee on Regional Australia
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**Submission to Inquiry into the impact of the
Murray-Darling Basin Plan in Regional Australia**

As Mayor of Gilgandra Shire Council I write this submission to the Committee with the particular focus on Coal Seam Gas (CSG) exploration activity in the Gilgandra Shire Council. The Shire falls entirely within the Murray Darling Basin (MDB) and our community is greatly concerned over the impact of CSG mining on underground water aquifers.

All primary producers in the Gilgandra Shire are reliant on underground water supplies for stock and domestic use. With an abundance of examples from Queensland and overseas of CSG activities causing interference with aquifers, I believe there needs to be greater scrutiny on CSG exploration from all levels of Government.

In addition to the concern from the farming community about the impact of CSG activities on individual farms water supply, as Mayor, I am concerned about the water supply of the township of Gilgandra. Council currently operates a network of nine bores to supply water to the people of Gilgandra. My concern is that the worst does happen and there is contamination to aquifers supplying the Gilgandra Township, where do 2800 people get their water?

CSG companies active in the region have assured our community publicly they will "make good" any instance of damage to water supply. How do you supply a town of 2800 people with water when their only supply is no longer potable?

Other issues in relation to CSG requiring examination include:

- Land Access Agreements

These agreements are being used as a tool to “divide and conquer” with some land owners getting a great deal, whilst others are receiving next to nothing. In relation to water and the MDB, the activity of your neighbour has an impact on your farm. When individuals sign an agreement that prohibits them to discuss the activities on their property, this is a step in the wrong direction for water management, environmental protection and the control of pest and diseases.

There is the need to have standardised legislation that details specifically what is required in land access agreements and sets a standard that must be followed in all States and Territories.

- Contributions to Infrastructure

Local communities' infrastructure is being stretched to cope with the impact of CSG operations. With no mechanism at a State or Federal level to deliver contributions from mining companies back to communities directly, local ratepayers are footing the bill to maintain roads and other infrastructure. The mining companies make small highly publicised, sporadic contributions to local organisations and Councils but no formalised contribution under a legislated scheme. If an industry was established on a particular road, they would be required to contribute to upgrade the road and or make Section 94a contributions to public amenities. A mining company pays royalties to the state with little if no compensation flowing back into the local community.

Whilst these issues are dealt with under State legislations it is becoming apparent there is a need for a national approach to these issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on this issue.

Yours faithfully

Cr Doug Batten
Mayor