

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express my support for the above Bill. Federal Legislation is urgently needed to protect our waterways from the plethora of Coal Mining and Coal Seam Gas projects across the country and to ensure appropriate stringent environmental controls are in place.

There is mounting evidence that Coal Seam Gas projects in particular, carry major environmental risks that are not being addressed with the potential for catastrophic contamination of waterways from release of noxious gases such as methane and other chemicals including mercury and arsenic.

In addition, CSG projects are impacting negatively on the food bowl of Australia through the rapid displacement of traditional farming communities and aggressive acquisition of traditional farmland.

Further, there is a risk that large-scale CSG projects may substantially deplete and potentially contaminate the Artesian Water Basin and thousands of bores which represent the life-blood of farmers in remote Australia. This is due to the massive drawdown of water required to extract gas across thousands of CSG projects and the potential for noxious gas leakage and uncontrollable earth movement.

The risks of CSG projects to waterways are very real as graphically illustrated in the recent ABC Four Corners Program "Gas Leak", which examined the situation in Queensland.

The program revealed:

- A politically motivated approval process for major CSG projects that placed State Revenue ahead of common sense environmental checks and balances
- Major CSG approvals have been granted by the Queensland State Government without addressing environmental impacts
- A lack of accountability in the industry for providing the necessary detailed information to enable an accurate environmental risk assessment to be undertaken or ongoing monitoring of gas and chemical contamination levels
- Denial from the industry in relation to clear water contamination issues
- Community concern in relation to contamination of waterways (Upper Darling)
- Long standing farming families "walking off the land" in disgust due to contaminated bore water

There is a growing community backlash against CSG projects across Australia because of weak or non-existent environmental controls at State level and the thousands of CSG proposals under consideration.

It seems the balance between sensibly managed resource development and appropriate environmental protection has been lost to the lure of multi-billion dollar deals.

It is clear that CSG projects require independent and transparent scrutiny at all levels and legislation is urgently required to protect our most precious resource – water. No amount of revenue will provide compensation for the contamination of waterways and resultant public health issues that could arise if stringent controls are not put in place.

I strongly support the Bill and would like to see it passed as quickly as possible.

I would also like to see all CSG projects reviewed, particularly the proposed QTC and Santos initiatives due to the magnitude and complexity of these proposals and associated major environmental risks. I would encourage the Arrow Coal seam gas project to be critically reviewed for the same reasons.