

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

I support the strengthening of the *EPBC Act 1999*. I encourage the Government to have this Bill brought before the Senate prior to the election. The amendments contained in the Bill do strengthen the Act but further provisions may be necessary to guarantee the level of protection required to ensure complete water security into the future.

It is fundamental that our water resources be protected from the impacts of coal seam gas exploration and extraction as well as large scale coal mining. With an increase in coal seam gas proposals across the nation it is important that there is a uniform national approach to assessments particularly where there are potential impacts on water resources. Federal power over this area is beneficial for the future. Water is most definitely a matter of national significance and the existence of a 'water trigger' in the Act offers an additional layer of investigation into assessments of proposals which potentially could have detrimental outcomes for water resources among other environmental factors.

The existence of a water trigger however is not necessarily enough to give the required level of protection, so therefore there should also be a strengthening of the role of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee as well as tighter definitions on what the significant impacts on water resources are and how they arise.

Living in an area which still contains some pristine waterways and which is part of the water catchment providing water supply to the greater Sydney area, it is paramount to urge protection of these resources. It is simply a resource which is far too valuable to lose. And for what? From all accounts the coal seam gas extraction industry delivers short term gains with long term impacts. We cannot sacrifice our most important resource, and must uphold vigorous controls over what activities take place within water catchment areas. The addition of this trigger to the *EPBC Act* definitely strengthens it and should be supported at the earliest possible opportunity.

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