

I am writing to put my full support behind the Federal Government's EPBC "water trigger" amendment. The proposed new laws need to be implemented to ensure this Federal layer of protection for our water resources. Please bring these new laws to the Senate, so that they can be passed before the September election.

It is vital that the water impacts of coal seam gas and coal mining are assessed before any projects are approved. I ask that these new laws apply to all projects approved after February 13, 2013. In fact, all coal seam gas projects approved since Minister Burke became Environment Minister should be revisited and their water impacts assessed. Water is too precious a commodity in this country to be treated so cavalierly.

Finally and most obviously, I would have thought, no coal seam gas projects or indeed any mining activity should be allowed in water catchment areas in Australia. These should be absolute no go areas for any mining company.

I would like to stress how vital it is that any federal independent assessments required by the Independent Expert Scientific Committee be made by those not directly involved in the oil and gas industry. I refer, as an exemplar to avoid, the Namoi Water Catchment Survey authors undertaken in 2012, whose parent company describes themselves on their website as 'the world's leading oilfield services company supplying technology, information solutions and integrated project management that optimize reservoir performance for customers working in the oil and gas industry'. This may be an independent expert but it is hardly disinterested. Let's see an invigorated CSIRO or consultants not directly linked to oil and gas extraction as our assessment authors.

I would like to see the new water laws extended to shale gas, tight gas and underground coal gasification. All have similar issues so it seems only fitting to apply these new levels of protection to those as well.

Finally, on a tangentially related issue: please listen to the landholders and communities who are desperate to protect their land and their water, and our country's food supply and water. If a community or a landholder does not want coal seam gas or coal mining on their lands they should have right in law to say no. Those who will be forced to live with the ramifications of mining in an area (on their water purity and its availability, not to mention the danger of land subsidence and their own health impacts) should have a say in the approval process. The mineral resources may belong to the Australian people but that does not mean they have to be mined by any one generation of Australians. They can stay in the ground until there is community consent and a safe way of extracting them. They are not going anywhere.

Kind regards  
Julie McCarthy