

Submission for the Senate Inquiry into the federal Government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Bill 2013 [Provisions]

I write this submission as a student of Environmental Science at Southern Cross University and as a concerned citizen of Northern Rivers, NSW.

Unconventional gas exploration and extraction has been shown to damage the immediate and surrounding environment over and over again. Due to limitations in time I won't make scientific references here but suffice to say that you don't have to look much further than Josh Fox's documentary movie, *Gasland*, to see that there are devastating effects on water and communities when coal seam gas takes hold (I have learnt much more than just this, I use it as an example).

As citizens of the world we need to be turning away from all such 'technologies' that harm what we have left of our natural world. It is so blatantly obvious that the few are lining their pockets at the expense of many. Is it not clear that the elite few that carry out this monumental level of destruction also require healthy ecosystems to survive? And as far as any 'debunking' of the clear evidence that CSG and other unconventional mining is damaging to water supplies, well, that is like pointing up and saying the midday sky is pink. I fail to understand why, when the impacts and evidence is right before our noses, we even NEED scientific evidence to prove that improvements and expansion in environmental protection is warranted.

As part of my studies I am currently reading 'The Ten Commitments', published by the CSIRO. What is glaringly obvious is that 1/ there is plenty of science explaining the impacts that we are having on the ecology of Australia and 2/ that there are an awful lot of gaps in the science that need to be filled, it is known they need to be filled, and as a result there is a great deficit in knowledge in many areas of ecology, marine conservation, biodiversity and so forth. This apparent attitude of 'if we don't have science for it, it isn't happening' needs to cease. Legislation needs to be passed that prevents any further, high environmental footprint developments, such as mining to be placed under enormous scrutiny and for guarantees of environmental safety to be in place before any commence. As far as underground aquifers are concerned, during discussions with my lecturers, it has come to my attention that we do not scientifically understand the impacts of mixing one aquifer with another, let alone what might happen in the long term when we pump them full of carcinogens and other toxic chemicals. Unconventional gas is not low-impact. Just the simplest of understanding about the structure of the wells themselves shows the lack of foresight (or care) in employing this technology

Having said that, in a place like Australia with abundant, renewable natural resources such as sunlight, we could be a shining example of best-practise by implementing the myriad of renewable options that pose no threat to waterways and other ecosystems. As a wealthy, developed nation it is our duty to do so.

According to The Ten Commitments, the number of jobs created by appropriately applying large scale renewable energy technology and retrofitting existing residential and commercial

buildings with renewable and energy saving devices and fittings would be equivalent to the number currently employed in coal mining at minimum. Of course I realise there are 'special interest groups' that would not like to see the wealth shared but would like it all for themselves, hence the choice of coal fired electricity, CSG and many others.

We have no legitimate excuse to destroy our beautiful continent any further.

I look forward to the day we have a bold government and parliament that is willing to stand up to their most powerful, greedy and careless lobbyists and say enough is enough! Have a look at some of the leading EU countries and what they are doing with renewable technologies and implement them. Then I will be proud to be an Australian, part of a nation that cares for that which will not line it's wallet but looks out for the future of its children.

Yours Sincerely,

Astrid Sweeney