

I live in St Peters, inner city Sydney, NSW, where at the end of 2010 we were astonished to discover that our suburb was licensed as an exploration site for coal seam gas. The drill sites were on the more industrial side of St Peters, but there were and are residences, parkland and a primary school within 2 kilometers of the identified sites. No consideration of the emissions, the effect of actual drilling, the risks to groundwater nor any other concerns of residents or businesses of the immediate area had been taken into account by any visible process. Every attempt to get information about the risks was fobbed off. Now under considerable political pressure from communities across the Sydney metropolitan area we see the NSW government retreating because of possible health and safety risks.

This confirms our fears, that the information required to make an accurate assessment of risks had not been gathered and that no such risk assessment had been undertaken. In urban areas the likelihood of gas emissions and liquid leaks or waste disposal as health risks, and of accidents which contaminate the atmosphere, create fire hazards and which can contaminate groundwater is unacceptable close to residences and business premises, let alone schools and urban parks where families resort. In urban areas it is difficult for any contaminant to disperse without affecting people, land in use or premises.

However the risk is no more acceptable in rural areas especially those used for food production, given the toxic metals used in the coal seam gas extraction and refinement processes. Our groundwater sources are vital to food production and land and environmental sustainability and must be treated as the precious resources they are, protected from contamination and used sparingly. With the impact of global warming already demonstrable in extremes of weather and the drying out of the south-east corner of the continent, the last thing we should risk is ground water if food production is to be sustained and safe. Trading off profits from coal seam gas (which in any case is not cleaner fuel than other fossil fuels as far as greenhouse gas emissions are concerned) for quick profits against future sustainable food production is enriching the mining industry at the expense of the rest of us and the rest of the planet

Kind regards
Anne Picot