

April 4, 2013

To The Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications

Re: Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Bill 2013

Recently news has come to light that approval for CSG projects have been conducted without necessary environmental information, or rushed through at a rate which would make such checks impossible. This proves that we cannot rely upon our local state and federal members of parliament to protect our local communities or our environment and water resources from mining projects such as CSG.

In other cases, such as the AGL project in Northern NSW, important conservation monitoring has not been done at all, leaving our communities, farming industry and important water resources at risk. It is convenient to put out a statement saying that no adverse environmental impacts are happening if there are no checks being done and no data collected.

We need to legislate to ensure our communities and our environment are safe from mining companies and government officials who are only interested in short term financial gain at the expense of our unique and vulnerable environment.

1. The Bill is strongly supported and we would like to see it passed quickly through the Senate.
2. We are very pleased that the bilateral approval provisions of the EPBC Act cannot apply to coal and coal seam gas developments that impact on water resources, and that there have been some improvements to the exemptions.
3. We want to ensure that the exemptions contained in the Bill are minimised, and that key projects, such as the Arrow Coal Seam Gas project in Queensland and Camden in western Sydney, are not exempt from it. Therefore, we would still like to see minor amendments to remove s22 2b) and d).
4. We recognise that there are other amendments that would substantially improve the Bill, that may be required in the future, such as:
  - Amending the Bill to cover all unconventional gas mining, including shale gas and tight gas, and unconventional coal mining
  - Strengthening the role of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee
  - Defining significant impacts on water resources
  - Introducing a set of requirements for the Minister to consider when making decisions on water resource impacts
  - Including a requirement for bioregional assessments prior to approval

I believe this bill is imperative to protect our communities and environment.

Regards

Danielle Carlisle