

## **Protecting water resources from coal seam gas and large coal developments: Senate inquiry into the environmental protection and biodiversity conservation amendment bill 2013.**

Dear Sir,

I believe it is essential that the government bring the new laws protecting water resources from coal seam gas and large coal projects to the senate so that they can be brought into law before the upcoming election. Protection of our water resources is vital for the future of Australia and its people.

Recent history in Queensland has demonstrated that with no checks or balances in place the risk of permanent devastating damage to our environment is very high. The debacle surrounding massive development in close proximity to the Barrier Reef is but one very obvious example. As recently detailed in the four corners programme farmers in Queensland already face loss of their bore water and hence their farm and livelihoods within 3 years because of Coal Seam Gas development.

Queensland's political system is unfortunate in that it has in place no upper house to review the decisions made by the lower house. The State Development Act is being used to fast tract projects without appropriate environmental controls, opportunity for adequate public comment or legal redress for review of decisions. Simply by declaring Significant Public Status the Coordinator General (an unelected position with a history of direct political appointments) can ensure the project is not refused, and can go ahead even without recommended restrictions. The Queensland government is continuing to amend environmental laws across the state, reducing the responsibilities for damage caused to the environment by mines and business that have not foreseen and taken steps to avoid adverse impacts of their activities in this changing climate.

Laws which take into account the water impacts of coal seam gas and large coal mining are vital. However as there is the looming prospect of large scale development of other types of unconventional gas and oil, including shale gas, shale oil and underground gasification, it is essential that this law not be restricted to just coal and coal seam gas. It is also important that these laws go further and protect the concept of freedom of choice so that landholders and communities have the right to say no to mining projects.

Dr Geralyn McCarron