

## **Inquiry: Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Bill 2013 [Provisions]**

As a citizen of this country I feel great concern about the proliferation of Coal Mining and Coal Seam Gas extraction generally.

The environmental impacts have shown to be huge in the past (land subsidence around Tahmoor, the Nepean River having pockets of gas that caught on fire, and so on) and the introduction of fracking and other techniques that so adversely affect the environment need serious consideration.

Living in the Southern Highlands of NSW, an urban environment that 'floats on aquifers' and is a major part of the water supply for Sydney, the Southern Highlands and now for the Goulburn region, it seems inconceivable to me that fracking, coal mining, or coal seam gas extraction would even be considered in this region, let alone anywhere else in Australia. Why would we want our water sources contaminated?

As such, I want to support the passage of the Bill through the Senate as quickly as possible, and make the following points:

1. I am 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.
2. I 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 Qld and Camden in western Sydney, are not exempt from it. Therefore, I would still like to see minor amendments to remove s22 2 b) and d) if possible.
3. I 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