

July 7, 2011

F.A.O, Committee Secretary,
Senate Standing Committee on Rural affairs and Transport
P.O.Box 6100
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600



COAL SEAM GAS MINING (CSG)

Dear Sirs,

I take the opportunity to place before you a matter of great importance to me, and many of my neighbours and fellow business operators.

In the Hunter Valley, we are becoming increasingly alert to the threat of Coal Seam Gas mining to our valley, the environment, water resources, and food futures.

My wife and I have invested our lifetime savings in our accommodation business in Lovedale, it is a source of great pride to us, it keeps us involved in the mainstream of life, provides mental stimulation, and an income.

The advent of coal seam gas mining not twenty kilometres away at Broke has "fractured" our ideal retirement. We now understand the very ground we stand on has been granted to AGL under PEL 267. Exploratory wells are now complete at Broke. Land owners live in fear of progression to a production status and a mushrooming of wells, which would cripple the Hunter Valley as a tourism destination, in the process killing off our modest revenue streams from tourism, and crippling our property assets. Already property owners in Broke are unable to sell their properties with wells sited only 200 metres from the village school. Since last week production licenses are approved for Gloucester. Conflict is almost certain.

Whilst we are very focused on the immediate impact on the Hunter Valley, Tourism and Viticulture; on a broader front the entire community is concerned about the threat to water courses and food production in Australia. The dangers of CSG mining threaten not just our local survival, but risks poisoning the Liverpool Plains and the food bowls of the country.

We are concerned about the impact the recent Queensland floods have had in flooding the open ponds created by the 'returned' water from CSG mining, as the contaminated waters are flushed down from the head waters of the Murray Darling Basin to the irrigation districts that feed many Australians. This event will reoccur in the future with greater concentrations.

Surely we cannot allow the short term energy needs of a single generation to poison the land for future generations. This is not the heritage I wish to pass on to the next generation.

There is no reason to desecrate Australia for the profits of foreign companies.

The longer we supply overseas countries with cheap carbon energy, the longer they hold off on developing sustainable energy solutions.

There is too much supposed infrastructure investment being made in road, rail and ports, supposedly to improve the national infrastructure, but actually being made at the behest of mining companies, for their benefit. As an example, the triplication of the rail line into the port of Newcastle, the development of new

coal export facilities at Newcastle, and the development of the F3 Link to Branxton are all mining infrastructure developments that benefit the mining companies primarily.

The taxes and royalties from CSG and Coal mining activities are being directed by state and federal governments to current revenue. This is a mistake. This income is never to be repeated, as a generation we have no right to squander this one off income for our own self interests, it is better invested for all future generations, we are stealing from them!

The bigger we grow the Government revenue streams from one time carbon exports, gas and coal, the bigger the hole we are digging for ourselves. One day the world will move from carbon energy to a more sustainable solution. When that happens, Australia's government budgets will be hopelessly out of balance, and that generation will be left to pay the price for our present lack of foresight.

Sustainability, food and water futures are a higher order of need in the scale of things, I implore you to give priority to these above all else.

Not much has been said about physical resistance to coal seam gas. The numerous conversations that abound around the country are getting more desperate. Even as the city grows to understand the concerns about Coal seam gas mining, and excessive coal mining, people are seeing that without political change, we are inching towards conflict. Country people are slow to anger, but with no alternatives, many folk in the twilight of their lives, are considering what forms of physical resistance can be taken to arrest the drilling rigs on the boundaries of their properties. Lets not descend into civil conflict in Australia over the greed of governments for revenues to sustain their tenure in power. This is not what the diggers fought for. It is not why our youth are fighting in overseas countries.

I address my comments to this senate Standing committee, that you as representatives of the people might consider all arguments, and elevate these concerns to your colleagues and bring about much needed improvement.

I, my community, and fellow tourism operators are desperate for our voices to be heard and action taken. Should you have the opportunity to visit the Hunter and the Lovedale area, be assured of a welcome reception, and an earnest desire to improve the outlook for all Australians living above a coal seam, and ultimately for all human beings dependant on food to eat, and water to grow it.

Please help, we have no confidence in a NSW political resolution.

Yours Faithfully
Bill Hastings