

Senate committee investigating c
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Senate Standing Committees on Rural Affairs and Transport
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Re. Effects of coal seam gas and mining in the Murray Darling Basin.
(Thank you for allowing late submissions, in case of email problems, we are mailing a hard copy)

Introduction. The Murray Darling Basin covers 1,058,800 sq kilometres. It contains over 40% of all Australia farms which produce wool, cotton, wheat, sheep, cattle, dairy produce, rice, oil seed, wine, fruit and vegetables for both domestic and overseas markets. Three quarters of Australia's irrigated crops and pastures are grown in the basin.

The Surat Basin is a part of Australia extraordinarily important for food and crop production, grazing, water catchment, environment and part of the Muurray Darling catchment Unlike other industries there is no tried and proven system of regulations that protects farmers, land or the water basins and aquifers The Condamine Plains run into the M. D. – see the film of Four Corners “The Gas Rush”

What can the Senate do to protect these finite resources. Apparently very little as the law now lies! Some of the following recommendations draw on the 4 Corners, 21/02/11 ABC program , (Has the committee viewed athis film about Queensland Coal Seam Gas experience)

1. Would the Senate committee recommend amendment to federal laws to protect these resources. The following is one example of possibilities.

Queensland Senator Larissa Waters has warned the federal laws are inadequate., that assessment is limited to impacts on threatened species. Without a trigger in our federal environment laws, the full impacts of CSG mining on farmland, groundwater and climate change cannot be assessed,” said Ms Waters, an environmental lawyer.

In the new Federal Parliament, the Australian Greens will move to amend federal laws to add climate and coal seam gas triggers to the Environment Protection

Biodiversity Conservation Act, so the cumulative impacts of this new industry are properly considered before approval is given.

2 Recommend that tight examination and controls over (and full details of) chemicals used in the fracking process be enacted before any further permits are issued. Have the chemicals to be used been detailed, tested and registered – this occurs with agriculture chemicals, why not with coal seam gas chemicals, in a new- to – Australia usage.

Discussion : Dr Mariann Lloyd-Smith, an adviser to the federal government's National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS), told the ABC there were concerns over contamination and loss of pressure in groundwater bores, the loss of agricultural land, and the nature and use of the chemicals involved. "We have a number of concerns about the toxicity of these chemicals in waterways," Dr Lloyd-Smith said.

..... "We are seeing worldwide concerns about hydraulic fracturing," she said. She joined calls for a moratorium on the industry in Australia.

Dr Mariann Lloyd-Smith (4 Corners 21/02/11), specialist in chemical management said that fracking chemicals are regulated, reported and disclosed by the Coal Seam Gas industry. She elaborates that the chemicals used were not listed in material safety data sheets for handling and disposal **and continue unregulated by the national regulator NICNAS**. In total there are 23 generally used chemicals in fracking, however just two have been assessed (Four Corners 21/02/2011), Dr Lloyd-Smith reports the rest remain unaccounted for. There are reports on contamination by BTEX chemicals in QLD boreholes as 18 Nov 2010 (BusinessExpectator 18/11/1

4 Corners 21/02/0=11 Mariann Lloyd-

Smith http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/special_ed/20110221/gas/default.htm

Gloucester Project Overview. Gloucester Coal Seam Gas Project

factsheet http://www.agl.com.au/Downloads/Gloucester_Project_overview.pdf

Condamine Plains run into the M. D. – see the film of Four Corners "The Gas Rush"

3. Ask the committee to urgently recommend collection of base-line data as to the chemicals in soils and water before any drilling or test permits are given for coal seam gas.

Without these it may be less easy to assess the extent to which fracking chemicals are moving through groundwater surface water flows and aquifer systems

4. Will the Committee meet with farmers on their own land – and some verbal reports of the on-going relations between farming and CSG. In Queensland

Our family farm, well run for generations, largely for beef is to be part of the 10km by 2km Cameby Downs coal mine. It also has four different gas companies on the site.

On another property, some years ago an initial drill was put in, with a holding pond for contaminated water. Like others, not looked after by the gas company, it dried out and sediment, chemicals whatever blew over the property. Rightly the farmer is concerned as if chemicals leak and found in the cattle he sells, his reputation and business is gone as he signs that his cattle are clean. .

The pond is still there, original 'product water' dried out and sediments remain ! Now it has rain water in it, the lining of the dam has large tears, and holes in the walls and a dead animal bloated and left.... Its footprints can be seen under the water where it tried desperately to get out – and the company may now want to use it again, holes and all. .

Another property – same farmer, finally gave in for seven wells on another property... Gas company left a gate open and all the cattle got out and took the two farmers two days to collect most of the cattle. No help from the gas company and finally a solicitor took up the case and they received some compensation.

The degree of vigilance required by farmers once the companies move on to their land is distressing and another unpaid load

5. Contracts between CSG and Landowner Unsatisfactory with no basic respect for rural land, penalties for misuse and do not restore the land to its previous state and do not compensate for the long term impacts.

There are few if any penalties in the contract and the myriad of insults to usage of valuable land. For example, contracts for X metres of road width for a road from A to B. Over the weeks this is extended by continuous small amounts – large truck turning circles dot the length of the line, small areas cleared for unknown purpose. The time and effort for the farmer on one of these blocks (usually about 2 sq miles) check up on what impact the CSG is having find the manager etc (rarely available. Meanwhile the land is compacted and a bit more damage.

6. Compensation for permanent loss and for lost opportunity costs as well as for impact of the actual operations.

Amount paid by the gas companies is ludicrous They make normal farming operations difficult to impossible with their activities, compacting soil, criss crossing properties/grid lines- and then there will be connecting roads/pipelines

After 20 years of this the company will move on – what will they leave behind - compacted road works and hectares of drill sites and if the percentage continues, then continued leaking gas wells- the process is destroying the land.

7. Draft Report tabled in Federal Senate outlines concerns about CSG impact on the Great Artesian Basin

The following is from Senator Bruce Scotts paper, Maranoa Memo and indicates the threat to the region's and Australia's water.

- **November 25, 2010 THE MARANOA MEMO! Bruce Scott's eNewsletter**
<http://www.maranoa.info/> **THE MARANOA MEMO**

Report tabled in Federal Senate outlines concerns about CSG impact on the GABA draft report from the Federal Environment Department's Water Group, tabled in the Federal Senate on 16 November 2010, ...information regarding the two CSG Santos and BG projects in Queensland, . approved by Environment Minister Tony Burke .

'.... there is no indication when any of the systems affected by the CSG developments will return to pre-CSG conditions'. when the underground water aquifers will return to their condition pre-CSG activities.

"Queensland Gas states that the Walloon Coal Measures ... will not begin to recover until 70 years after CSG production ceases". 70years after! They will only then *begin*, according to this report, to recover, not fully recover. It says the date also "shows that Springbok, Hutton and Precipice Sandstones will not have recovered after 200 years". I have to say that this is very alarming stuff..... a further sandstone aquifer, deeper down "...indicate recovery ..in the order of 1,000 years".

... This report really should be ringing alarm bells in the Minister's office. I know that my communities out in western Queensland are not convinced. When we read these reports, page after page after page of documents that have recently been tabled in the Senate, more alarm bells will ring.

Read my speech in full at www.maranoa.info <<http://www.maranoa.info/>> . And please don't hesitate to email me with your thoughts on this very concerning news that is only just coming to light.

Authorised by Bruce Scott MP, 59 Condamine Street, Dalby Qld 4405

8. Farmers story and the pathetic fine of \$40,000 for Arrow Energy “spewing methane and water up to 90 meters high for more than a day at its project near Dalby”

- **Arrow Energy caps coal seam gas well blowout near Dalby that was spewing gas and water** John McCarthy From: [The Courier-Mail](#) May 23, 2011 6:18PM

Property owner Tom O'Connor said it was the fourth incident in recent years on his property, known as the Daandine field, about 25km west of Dalby.

“Every time it's a different issue,” Mr O'Connor said. Queensland Mining Minister Stirling Hinchliffe told AAP there were no public health concerns because of the restrictions which have been put in place.....Mr Hinchliffe said an initial report was due later on Monday and at this stage he did not have all the details. “While the Queensland government stands ready to take appropriate action we need to have the full information and details before pursuing these sort of issues,” he said

- This movement quite rightly points out that the coal seam gas industry is conducting an uncontrolled experiment on the Australian environment that could cause serious harm to the Great Artesian Basin and this could take centuries to fix.

That the industry does not know what to do with the water and salt that comes to the surface.

That farmers could lose their bore water or have it contaminated and rural landowners will probably have extraordinary difficulty going about their everyday activities and not be able to sell their land if it has gas infrastructure on it.

Coal seam gas company Arrow was yesterday fined \$40,000 for trespassing on the Daandine Homestead, west of Dalby, four times between June 2008 and December 2010. June 21 EDO

Thank you for your interest, however at this stage we believe that farmers, disappointed by many politicians, are tired of attending meetings – would it be possible for Senators to spend time visiting properties affected to see and understand from that perspective.

James Kerr. Judy whistler