

Submission on Coal and Gas Strategy – April 2011
Peter Bracher

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission, in this case regarding coal seam gas mining.

*Most importantly, I urgently wish to register my **UNEQUIVOCAL OPPOSITION** to coal seam gas (CSG) exploration and mining in general, and in the Northern Rivers area of NSW in particular.*

My wife and I moved from inland S.E. Queensland to Tyalgum Creek more than three years ago. We were drawn to this beautiful part of NSW's Northern Rivers for several reasons. Most important among them are the superb environment; the abundance of safe, clean water; and especially the tranquil and uplifting 'feel' of the Tweed Volcano Caldera. To be honest with you, the possibility of this area being desecrated by CSG exploration and mining finds me feeling heartbroken, betrayed and violated.

We humans—at the risk of stating the obvious—are utterly dependent for our survival and well-being on clean water, clean air and unpolluted soil. If any of these is threatened, so are current and future generations. In my assessment, CSG exploration and mining jeopardises all three.

Do you know that coal seam gas exploration commonly utilises 'hydraulic fracturing' (also known as hydro-fracking or fracking)? I want to bring to your attention that this process has a number of major, if not actually CATASTROPHIC, downsides. Here are some of them:

- ✗ Significant use of water (obviously a scarce and valuable resource in Australia);*
- ✗ Use of chemical additives (some of which are carcinogenic);*
- ✗ Contamination and/or poisoning of local aquifers (used for human and animal consumption);*
- ✗ Potential soil, creek and river contamination by toxins (if evaporation dams overflow);*
- ✗ Potential contamination of the Great Artesian Basin (I understand aquifers are interlinked);*
- ✗ Threats to food production and security (especially for 'certified organic' and 'biodynamic' farmers);*
- ✗ Methane gas leakage into soil and atmosphere (some such leaks have not be stoppable in SE Qld or the USA);*
- ✗ Noise pollution from associated machinery and equipment;*
- ✗ Construction of unsightly and industrial-type infrastructure in uniquely valuable rural heartlands;*
- ✗ Loss of access to parts of property-owners' lands;*
- ✗ reduced privacy for rural land-holders;*

✗ threats to biodiversity and other environmental values;

✗ potential declines in property values;

✗ potential declines in local council rates revenue;

✗ threats to tourist industries;

✗ Exposure to potential terrorist activity (i.e. to damage overland gas transmission pipes).

By way of providing additional information, I refer you to the following links:

ABC TV's Four Corners story which went to air on 21 February 2011:

http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/special_edts/20110221/gas

Trailer for the recent American documentary movie, GASLAND

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZe1AeH0Qz8>

A website created regarding the Queensland experience:

<http://lockthegate.org.au>

There is no question that existing and aspired-to lifestyles requires increasingly more energy. However, in the rush and clamour to provide consumers with more and more energy—not to forget providing revenue to business and governments alike—broader questions of cost-effectiveness, sustainability and care of the environment for the longer term are far too easily brushed aside or dismissed as irrelevant or of lesser importance.

In the matter of CSG exploration and mining, there is a danger that 'short-termism' and strictly economic values will override other, genuinely humane values. Yet it should not be overlooked that it is the latter which enable life to be truly rich and sustainable. I therefore urge that you give them careful consideration.

My appeal as you read this today is not just for me and Jan, nor merely for our friends and other Northern Rivers' residents. It is also for the presently voiceless future dwellers in this area: their best interests need to be ensured.

Finally, I'll offer you an insight: a prediction of a possible light-filled moment in your own destiny. In years ahead, you might look back with justifiable pride as you explain to your grandchildren how you were inspired by their generation's welfare when—back in 2011—you concluded and recommended that coal seam gas mining was just not worth the risks. Your grandchildren would doubtless admire you and thank you very much for having them in your mind and heart — all those years before!

Kindest regards,

Peter Bracher

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