

Submission on Coal and Gas Strategy – April 2011
Clive and Tracy Parker

To Whom It May Concern,

We wish to register our complete and total opposition to coal seam gas (CSG) exploration and mining in general, the Northern Rivers area of NSW in particular and most specifically in the Tweed Valley.

We also wish to register our call for a moratorium on the industry until ALL health, environmental and land-use conflict issues have been addressed and the process is PROVEN to be safe, with stringent safety guidelines in place which are rigorously policed.

Referring specifically to the granting of PEL445 and application PELA134 in Northern NSW – that CSG exploration should even be considered (as in licence applied for) much less GRANTED, in an area of such beauty, bio-diversity and ecological sensitivity is quite simply outrageous. The method by which these licences were obtained/granted is similarly so ... how can it be legal to even consider the ruination of an area of world heritage significance (and surrounds) without, in the very least, some kind of community consultation prior to exploration licence application?

How can it be that one has to alert the community prior to getting married – but not if you're planning to rip up their land, poison their water, release toxic chemicals into their air and ruin their way of life? How can this be right?

We operate a small, but highly successful tourist accommodation operation in the Tweed Valley, which is part of the Mt Warning Caldera – in the top FIVE areas in Australia listed as an iconic destinations for both international and domestic tourism. This puts our region alongside Kakadu, Ayers Rock and the Great Barrier Reef in terms of international and domestic importance.

If CSG comes to Northern NSW, you can kiss goodbye to the tourism industry in the region. Even if you managed to “hide” the ugly exploration fields, disguise the pipeline, somehow muffle the noise of the pumping stations – you won't be able to reduce the massive number of large truck movements required for day-to-day operation (so roads are constantly under repair and the ambience of driving in the countryside is destroyed for both locals and tourists alike); you won't be able to hide the fact that the water table is dropping (so the rainforests will die first), the remaining water is being poisoned (so the wildlife will go next), and the air is becoming toxic (I guess that makes us, the human inhabitants on the extinction list as well).

The gas companies will maintain that this is a highly safe activity. I don't know if you've seen the movie “Gasland”, a documentary made about the CSG industry in the U.S., or the Four Corners documentary made on the same industry in S.E. Queensland and how it is affecting the Great Artesian Basin ground-water supply. If not, I urge that you see both. Please do not be lulled into a

false sense of security by soothing words from gas company officials as they wave \$\$\$ signs in front of you. Money is short-term gain, this poison is forever!

Whilst the mining companies in Australia have stated that they don't use the same chemicals as in the U.S. they don't satisfactorily reveal which chemicals they DO use. As is clearly shown in the 4 Corners documentary, they are using chemicals they claim they are not! They have no response to over-use and poisoning of the water table, no satisfactory response to questions about safety levels for waste disposal.

The gas company stance is "we're not in a hurry to explore in your area" but on our own news a month ago, it was clearly shown how a drill site in Mullumimby is already leaking methane .. a few metres from a creek! If this is gas company "truth" and "safe" operation I'm not looking forward to a long or healthy life in this area when they really get started.

They blatantly lie to gain access to private property and once there, they grow like a cancer with nothing the land-holder can do to prevent it. How can this be right? Are we a democracy or a dictatorship? Do our personal and property rights only apply when there's no "money grab" at stake?

I urge to you to take a look at such websites as <http://www.lockthegate.org.au> and read through the fact sheets on what CSG really involves, the impact on the environment, animal and human health. Please be aware that the impact on the environment will not only affect the area in which drilling takes place so it won't be a case of "out of sight, out of mind". Please think on this:

* The water table belongs to all Australia .. and when it's gone with the remainder poisoned, what will happen to food production in this country?

* Health is of National concern, when large sectors of the community are suffering from chemical exposure leading in some cases to cancer and death, what will be the impact on the health system in this country?

* With an area of national and international importance dying and poisoned, and a reputation for unsafe drinking water/air in Australia, what will happen to the tourist industry in this country?

* It appears, from experience in S.E. Queensland, that once a property owner has allowed a gas company on their land for whatever initial reason, they can't get them out and can have their own supporters removed and fined by police if they try to protest in any way ... what has already happened to democracy and the law in this country?

* With such obvious targets dotted all over the landscape, with no security and very little in the way of safety features, it seems to me that a terrorist wouldn't need a bomb ... only a match, so what will happen to national security in this country?

We are fully cognisant of the fact that more/cheap energy is needed to sustain our lifestyles and standards of living. However voters are becoming more and more aware of the long-term ramifications of the short term solutions.

This is not just a matter for the "greenies" – we are all concerned with the future of our water, our land and our health. What is good for the environment will usually be good for us in the long term – and all indications are that CSG extraction is not good for the environment.

To (on the one hand) spout platitudes about a carbon tax and saving the planet, whilst quietly and with no community consultation, preparing to turn the Australian water supply into a toxic waste dump with an industry that produces more carbon waste than a city full of vehicles, is not only insulting to the intelligence of the average “man in the street”, it’s short-sighted and stupid.

I urge that you:

- * ensure that a full and TRANSPARENT investigation into this industry takes place during a moratorium on all further activity;

- * ensure investigative committee(s) and regulatory bodies are made up of individuals with no vested interest, either politically or financially, in the mining industry;

- * that full disclosure of intention and community consultation becomes part of the licence application process so that local communities can decide if they want to welcome this industry to their area rather than having to fight against it being forced on them;

- * that you consider safer and cleaner alternatives to this diabolical murder of Australia’s future existence as we know it.

Regards

Clive and Tracy Parker