



CLARENCE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

31 Skinner Street

South Grafton 2460

Phone/ Fax: 02 6643 1863

Web site: www.cec.org.au

E-mail: admin@cec.org.au

Date: 10th April 2013

Submission

to

**The Director Strategic Regional Policy,
Department of Planning and
Infrastructure.**

srlup@planning.nsw.gov.au.

On

**Draft NSW Government SEPP Amendment
on Coal Seam Gas Exclusion Zones**

Compiled by John Edwards
Honorary Secretary

Submission on the Draft NSW Government SEPP Amendment on Coal Seam Gas Exclusion Zones

Introduction.

The Clarence Environment Centre has maintained a shop-front in Grafton for over 23 years, and has a proud history of environmental advocacy. We have been particularly concerned about the activities of coal seam gas miners in NSW and have already made a number of submissions and approaches at all levels of government over the past 4 years calling for a comprehensive review of all aspects of the industry. With a complete dearth of information dissemination from both the gas industry and government, we have also sponsored numerous information seminars for concerned landowners around the district.

The screening of the American documentary, "Gasland", was a wake-up call to the world, and the predictable response from the gas mining industry, claiming that what they were doing here in Australia is not the same, failed to convince many in the community.

It now seems the community's scepticism was well-founded, with evidence emerging from Queensland to show that what the gas industry is doing in that State, is exactly what they were doing in the USA. Water bores are being set alight, carcinogens being found in water supplies, exploding well heads, and the release of toxic produced water into waterways. As well fugitive methane emissions finding their way to the surface, are resulting in elevated levels of methane and other toxins occurring in the vicinity of gas mining operations in south east Queensland, with direct implications for human health.

Past claims by the industry that it is highly regulated were a complete nonsense, and the NSW Government's recent moves to place restrictions on where gas wells can be sited has seen several gas companies 'spit the dummy' and leave the state.

Justification

Coal seam gas (CSG) is a fossil fuel and its use contributes to greenhouse gas pollution. It generates more than 40 times the amount of greenhouse gas per unit of energy generated than solar or wind and its use will make a major contribution to global warming.

The big lie being promoted by the Australian CSG industry, is that methane is an ideal, low emissions, transitory fuel for electricity production as the country moves to a renewable energy future. While that statement holds true for conventional natural gas, i.e. that sourced from underground reservoirs that do not require multiple well heads, horizontal drilling, and hydraulic fracturing (fracking), it does not hold true for unconventional gas such as CSG.

The lie becomes clear when all the collateral carbon emissions of unconventional gas mining are taken into consideration, something that has now been quantified by scientists from the Cornell University in the USA and other scientific institutions. They have found that when all the emissions, including methane vented or flared directly into the atmosphere, along with emissions from machinery used in land clearing; the manufacture and laying of pipelines; in drilling and fracking processes; as well as the pumping, refining and liquefaction processes, and transport, the total footprint of CSG exceeds even that of coal-fired electricity production.

The fact that most gas in NSW is extracted for export, not to meet local energy needs, further confirms the transition fuel lie.

We acknowledge that the proposed move to establish 2000m buffer zones around urban settlements is a great step forward, compared to the virtually restrictions free rules that are currently in place.

However, given the urgent messages being received from the scientific community about the dire need to drastically cut greenhouse gas emissions, or face an untenable 7 degrees temperature rise by century's end, the Clarence Environment Centre believes CSG and other forms of unconventional gas mining should cease immediately, and sincere efforts made to achieve a 100% emissions free energy sector as soon as possible.

Therefore, we believe that any comments made in regard to proposed CSG buffer zones, would simply be condoning the continuation of an industry that, if unchecked, has the power to destroy life on earth as we know it.

We thank the NSW Government for this opportunity to comment, and sincerely hope our plea for a sane approach to tackling the causes of climate change is heard and acted upon.

Yours Sincerely

John Edwards
Honorary Secretary.