

Community over Mining

Mr Clinton Rodda
MANAGING DIRECTOR
Southern Rural Water
PO Box 153
MAFFRA, Victoria 3860

15th January, 2012

Dear Sir,

Your agency recently attended an information day with DPI in response to a community campaign over a mining exploration application EL 5394 by Commonwealth Mining Pty Ltd for the areas of Glengarry, Toongabbie, Cowwarr and Denison to explore for **Coal and Coal Bed Methane (CSG)**.

This campaign (**Community Over Mining**) continues to seek more information as the area under the exploration zone including adjacent mining exploration permits are all contained in closely settled farming land between two major river systems, multiple watercourses flowing through it, wetlands, floodplain areas and water storage reserves.

Our local communities have ongoing concerns with any potential new coal developments on our prime agriculture land as well as expected impacts, both environmental and sustainable, on our local water resources.

We rely on a combination of ground and surface water for our stock, domestic needs and irrigation and are reliant on this source being of good quality.

As your agency are the administrators of groundwater licences for the nominated area our communities request information on how any new mining operations requiring significant water allocation could be obtained and sustained within the catchment area given the current restrictions already existing for any new water allocations.

Furthermore, as no one can guarantee that coal seam gas extraction will not contaminate groundwater, surface water and our environment, is your current available data for ground water and aquifers in the nominated area capable of effectively assessing the suitability for this region to accommodate any new coal mining developments?

As this campaign is ongoing and will now be joining with likeminded communities struggling against mining expansion, we are collating all relevant information so to be informed well in advance in the event that any current exploration permits progress to a mining licence application and production as is proposed with a tight gas project at Seaspray.

Our communities would expect that all available data (Groundwater Management Plans) and regulatory frameworks be updated to reflect future mining developments given Department of Primary Industry's indication that **"Gippsland is in its infancy for exploration with Latrobe Valley to be hit hard."**

A Gippsland campaign group focusing on improving community engagement with government & industry for the benefit of our future

Website: www.communityovermining.org www.gippslandactiongroup.org

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There is widespread community opposition across Australia to the coal seam gas industry as evidential concerns and impacts already exist on the environment in Queensland and NSW with groundwater and aquifers. Yet, failure of our own Victorian State Government to acknowledge or address concerns within the mining industry and to continue with the progression of CSG exploration licenses is totally irresponsible. Fracking for tight gas is already in use and Gippsland is the only Victorian area with nine licenses currently being explored for with Coal Bed Methane.

Our group is liaising with DPI to ensure there is improved community access to website information, however, the real concern lies with the governments trust in the industry to engage, self-monitor and self-regulate all new coal and gas technologies.

Given the lack of transparency by the companies and available information from government departments, we feel that the government is favouring short-term economic windfalls over that of other social and/or environmental values.

For instance,

- Currently, not enough information is known about underground water aquifers.
- Currently, no one knows where approx. 50% of the fracking fluid flows underground.
- Currently, there appears to be no guidelines for waste disposal (typically salts) and treated waste water in regards to Coal Seam Gas extraction fluids.

As Southern Rural Water is an agency of the State Government for the purpose of managing rural water sustainably for the benefit of our communities, how can you assure our rural farming communities that any new mining developments will not affect your efforts to maintain water resource planning, sustainable irrigation, river health and water licencing?

Additionally, how can your agency guarantee that:

- **Ministers Discretion** would not override your objectives to protect the long term sustainability and water quality (salinity) of our groundwater whilst preventing the level of groundwater declining further to maintain current and future farming irrigation
- Regulatory frameworks will be independent of governments interests

Industry (and Lakes Oil in particular) claim they are on the cusp of a major development of tight gas deposits in Gippsland. It is therefore imperative that we ensure regulation is adequate to manage this industry before it moves to a commercial production phase. Let us not allow our Victorian government to make the same mistakes as their northern counterparts have and render our environmental protection agencies ineffectual.

All levels of government need to cooperate and work out a plan that secures the important agricultural sector, protects the environment and provides economic security for our local region in the long term.

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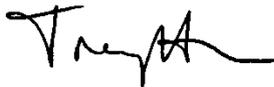
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Mining developments without proper safeguards and regulatory frameworks will not provide economic gain if future generations have to pay for it. Currently, government is allowing industry to exploit our resources which are owned by the people but not for the shared benefit of the people.

If you require any further information, please feel free to contact me on 0407 924 003.

Yours sincerely,



Tracey Anton

Spokesperson

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