



Eltham Valley Pantry Pty Ltd

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Director

Assessment, Policy Systems & Stakeholder Engagement

Dept of Planning and Infrastructure

G.P.O. Box 39

Sydney 2001

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Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed protection of important agricultural land from the prospect of Coal Seam Gas Mining. I wish to make submissions on two topics; my own farm, and the proposed Northern Rivers Rail Trail initiative.

1. The Eltham Valley Pantry and Eltham Valley Pecans

My husband and I have a 39 hectare farm in the Eltham Valley (east of Lismore) which includes a 9 hectare pecan orchard at the addresses 712 and 713 Boatharbour Rd, Eltham, 2480. Our farm is located in Area 51 of the Maps on exhibition, but it impossible to tell from visual inspection of the map whether or not our farm has been designated for protection.

Over the last ten years, we have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars of our own money to add value to our farm by building a pecan processing factory, and a cafe/restaurant known as the Eltham Valley Pantry.

The Eltham Valley Pantry now makes an important contribution to the economy of the Lismore LGA, employing 14 staff and bringing in revenue to the region from overseas and interstate visitors as well as providing local amenity. People visit the Eltham Valley Pantry to be able to eat food produced from the farm and to enjoy the local serenity, clean soil and clean air.

The farm is successful as we have plentiful rainfall, and sufficient ground water to carry us through the dry months. The potential for damaging our (Australia's) aquifers is my single biggest issue with CSG mining and because the compromising of our water supply is such a serious issue for Australia and NSW, the CSG industry must prove that aquifer integrity can be maintained if it is to achieve a social licence to proceed. Government has the responsibility to protect our water table at all costs as the consequences of contamination or fracturing of it are catastrophic.

Aside from any potential damage to the water table, coal seam gas mining within 50 km of the Eltham Valley would be deleterious for our "clean, green" brand, and jeopardise our ability to continue to attract visitors to the Eltham Valley Pantry.

Due to the level of our personal investment, and to the success of the Eltham Valley Pantry, we seek protection of our investment and of that facility by ensuring that the Eltham Valley is included in any CSG exemption zone.

2. The Northern Rivers Rail Trail Project

Whilst still only at the feasibility planning stage, the proposed conversion of the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line into a cycling and walking trail is a powerful idea for Northern NSW with the potential to create huge economic benefits for the region due to the establishment of all the associated support industries which would include accommodation, eateries, galleries, bicycle tours etc.

The Rail Trail has the potential to attract hundreds of thousands of visitors a year due to its magnificent location, winding through the caldera of Mt Warning. WA has recently built a 1000km trail in order to attract tourists to WA, but in sheer beauty it will not compare with the Northern Rivers Rail Trail. If the Rail Trail is established it will require the creation of a "special economic zone" either side of the corridor. This would enable farmers to sell a small parcel of their land adjacent to the rail trail to the potential operators of the B & B's, cafes, bicycle service/hire businesses etc to enable them to establish their businesses on a free hold basis.

However, as with all other Northern Rivers food or tourism attractions, the appeal will only remain if the trail is not despoiled by CSG wells. It is imperative for all food and tourism operators in the Northern Rivers that our "clean and green" reputation is maintained.

Therefore, when considering land for exemption from CSG operation, I urge you to include the land a couple of hectares either side of the Casino to Lismore Rail corridor.

Given the high degree of population density in the Northern Rivers, its great potential for agribusiness and tourism related industries, and the (almost universal) community hostility towards CSG mining, it would make sense to create a large CSG exemption across the Tweed, Lismore, Ballina and Byron LGAs and some of the Richmond River LGA.

This would create certainty for both the CSG and non CSG industries in the area. It is my understanding that there is not very much CSG in these areas in any case, and my submission that the potential benefits of such an exemption due to the subsequent economic contribution from the non CSG industries will confer great benefits for NSW.

Please feel free to seek additional information or clarification of any of the above.

Yours sincerely



Julie Rhodes
Managing Director
Eltham Valley Pantry

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