

Bathurst Community
Climate Action Network Inc

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**Submission objecting to the proposed *State Environmental Planning Policy
Amendment (Gas Exploration and Mining) 2014***

Submit through: http://planspolicies.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=6805

The Bathurst Community Climate Action Network (Climate Network) was formed out of a public meeting in June 2007 by a group of citizens concerned to address climate change in the interest of the environment. It now has a membership of over 150. BCCAN lacks the technical expertise to comment in detailed way in relation to the proposed changes to legislation relating to legislation affecting the coal seam gas and coal industry and the time allowed for submissions is extremely brief. However, we have grave concerns about any changes which reduce openness and lower the environmental safeguards to the operation of mining. In particular we believe that barriers to the mining of fossil fuels whose consumption threatens the global climate should remain high and approval processes for exploration and mining should be public.

BCCAN believes that the proposed changes including not requiring a Environmental Impact assessments for exploration licenses for six or more gas wells run contrary to recent advice by the NSW Chief Scientist in her enquiry into Coal Seam Gas. While the Chief Scientist suggested reducing complexity of applications, it is still appropriate that exploration licenses are determined by the Office of Planning with the public having access to Planning Assessment Committee where proposals impact on the public. The proposal also removes important scrutiny from an industry that has the potential to put at risk local agricultural and community water supplies as evidenced in the recent reports that both AGL at Gloucester and Santos in the Pilliga have secretly used caesium-137 in their CSG exploration. We believe that it is in the public interest for the activities of these companies to be public and accountable.

If such accountability affects the economic viability of the companies so be it. The NSW government has excellent policies promoting the development of renewable energy and renewable energy offers a far more environmentally and economically sustainable energy solution than the burning of fossil fuels.

The proposed legislative changes distinguish between CSG exploration and CSG production. While, in theory, this may seem logical, in practice the distinction is unclear and many CSG exploration wells operate for long periods of time and involve the use of the same chemicals used in production. Issues of noise and air pollution from exploration wells are often the same as those for production.

In summary we regard these proposed changes as a retrograde step weakening community oversight of fossil fuel exploration and mining and we urge the government to withdraw the legislation.

T Carpenter President

B Hill Secretary

BCCAN

2/12/2014