

CSG water plans need more thought!

Coal seam gas companies have been given approval to extract from the Walloon Coal Measure more than 800 times the volume of underground water as is provided for in the Great Artesian Basin Plan. Hydrologists argue that the underground water systems are interconnected which could have disastrous consequences for the Great Artesian Basin.

Great Artesian Basin Plan

General reserve: 23,000ML
Allocation for projects of State significance: 10,000ML
TOTAL RESERVE: 33,000ML
Gas Industry approvals: (approx.) 14,000,000ML–27,000,000ML

So far the ALP and LNP have stood together to pass laws totally in favour of the mining and gas companies to the disadvantage of local residents.



Coal seam gas vs. Agriculture

Value of industry in Queensland for year 2006-07	Gross Value of Agriculture, Agricultural services & Agri-food Production	\$22.7 billion	Exports = 60% of total production
	Estimated Gross Value of mining, petroleum and gas industries	\$26.36 billion	
Employment in Queensland	Employment in Agriculture, Agricultural services & Agri-food	272,471 people*	
	Projected employment estimate for LNG industry	18,000 people	
Direct employment in southern Qld	Direct employment in agriculture in southern & south-east Qld	40,000 people**	
	Estimated direct employment in LNG in southern & south-east Qld	4,300 people	

*2006 census figures ** approximately



Support the Greens' fight to save our food bowl and water resources

The Greens **Action on Coal & Coal Seam Gas Campaign** has been actively supporting the many community groups involved in the **Lock the Gate Campaign** as well as using our influence with the Greens in the federal parliament to raise questions about coal and coal seam gas developments. We need your support to make this a major issue at the next election to force both major parties to protect our rural and regional communities from devastation.

To be added to the mailing list to receive email updates about **Action on Coal & Coal Seam Gas** events, email: admin@actiononcoalandgas.org

To donate to the Greens **Action on Coal & Coal Seam Gas Fighting Fund**:

- Donate via our website: www.actiononcoalandgas.org
- Or send a cheque or money order with your details to **PO Box 246 Darling Heights Qld 4350**

To join the Queensland Greens, ask for membership information at: www.qld.greens.org.au or fill in your details and post to the address below.

Name:
Address:
Email address:
Phone number: Donation amount: \$

Send to: **PO Box 246 Darling Heights Qld 4350**
Email: admin@actiononcoalandgas.org

www.actiononcoalandgas.org



Coal and Coal Seam Gas:

...set to devastate Queensland's Coast & Country



www.actiononcoalandgas.org



What is the coal and gas rush?

The State government is promoting the massive expansion of coal mining across Queensland and the development of a new export industry based on coal seam gas (CSG).

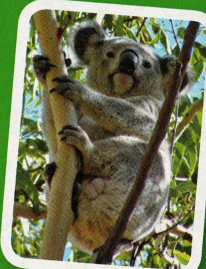
Premier Bligh wants to **increase** coal production from **190 million tonnes to 340 million tonnes** per annum. There are at least 40 new or expanded coal mines currently under consideration and these will be some of the biggest open-cut coal mines in the world. In November 2010, a **40 megatonne** open-cut coal mine — the biggest in the southern hemisphere to date — was approved in Wandoan, but in the Galilee basin of central Queensland there are plans for **60 megatonne** open-cut coal mines.

There are new approvals for open cut coal mines on rich agricultural land all around Queensland, including the Darling Downs and the Fitzroy Basin. Eighty-percent of the state is now under a mining lease or exploration permit of some kind, including on nature refuges, prime farmland, on the Mary River which Queenslanders fought so hard to save from the Traveston Dam and adjoining the whale sanctuary of Wide Bay.

CSG (or 'natural gas') is a relatively new industry in Australia. It involves extracting methane from the coal seams by drawing massive amounts of toxic, salt-laden water to the surface. Companies also sometimes 'frack' (fracture) underground systems by injecting highly contentious chemicals under pressure into coal seams and aquifers. Already one farm bore on the Darling Downs has been contaminated, confirming community fears about health dangers of the process. There are now 1,000 gas wells across the Darling Downs but the CSG industry plans for over 40,000 wells which threaten to contaminate and destabilise the Great Artesian Basin. The gas will be condensed, piped to Gladstone where it will be liquefied (LNG), then exported. Giant LNG plants are planned at Abbott Point (just north of Bowen) and in

Species under threat

Rare and endangered plants and animals threatened by port and mining developments include the bridled nail-tail wallaby, the grey falcon, the brigalow woodland snail, Irrawaddy river dolphin, the southern squatter pigeon, the black-throated finch, koalas, rare acacias, dugongs and loggerhead turtles.



Gladstone. There are CSG exploration tenures over 50% of central Queensland and 75% of southern Queensland.

Won't this gas rush create lots of jobs?

Well, no. Mining and gas companies, along with our governments are promising 'jobs, jobs, jobs' but when mines and gas wells take farms out of production, jobs in other sectors are lost. Agriculture and related food production are actually much bigger generators of jobs in Queensland and these sectors are directly at risk from coal mining and gas drilling. Continued investment in coal and CSG is also causing huge losses of potential jobs in renewable energy.

Isn't CSG the cleaner, greener fossil fuel?

Supporters of CSG promote it as a 'transitional fuel' towards a cleaner economy, saying it produces less greenhouse emissions than coal. These claims however, are largely unsubstantiated. Methane (CH₄) is a far more potent greenhouse gas than CO₂ and this is compounded by high emissions from its extraction, transport and processing.

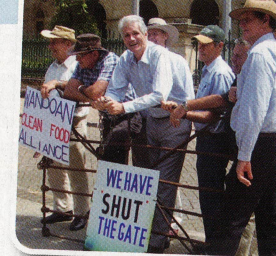
Hasn't CSG already been regulated?

Both federal and state governments have imposed a record number of environmental conditions on CSG companies. However, they allow 18 months of operations before any of these conditions are enforced. Furthermore, regulations come into effect only **after** environmental damage has been done. We've already seen this environmental regulation at work: At the Underground Coal Gasification trials near Kingaroy and Chinchilla, both trials resulted in contamination of nearby aquifers. Early in 2010, a dam at the Xstrata mine near Rolleston burst its banks during heavy rain, contaminating the Fitzroy River catchment. Xstrata was fined just \$2000! Expert advice to the state and federal governments was against approving these projects. The federal environment minister's *Water Advice Group* has warned that the amount of water that the CSG industry plans to draw from the Walloon Coal Measure could not only drain bores that farmers and towns depend on but also cause land subsidence. Some CSG companies' own environmental impact statements acknowledge that underground water systems are unlikely to recover for a thousand years given the volumes of water they intend to extract from across Queensland. Leading soil scientists oppose both coal and CSG development on agricultural lands, warning that good quality soils can't be rehabilitated.

Hasn't the government already said it will protect agricultural land?

No, all it has promised is to protect 'the best of the best'. Only 4% of Queensland land is suitable for cropping but the

premier has committed to protect only a portion of this land. This was highlighted in November 2010 when she gave the go ahead to Xstrata's huge Wandoan mine on good cropping land rather than wait for the Strategic Cropping Lands consultation process and legislation to be enacted. Coal and gas legislation is weighted heavily in favour of mining and gas companies. Landholders are given only 40 days to negotiate access with gas companies; if agreement is not reached within that time, the company can refer the matter to the Land Court. This automatically grants them access to private land without any decision from the Land Court.



Isn't the expansion of ports in Bowen, Mackay and Gladstone good for regional Queensland?

The exponential increase in shipping through the World Heritage Listed Great Barrier Reef is likely to lead to more groundings and oil spills in these protected waters. The expansion of ports to support coal and CSG will also impact the waters and seagrass beds of the Great Barrier Reef. Protected mangroves will be cleared, coral reefs and seabeds dredged and nationally significant wetlands degraded. The mining industry is exempt from Queensland's *Vegetation Management Act* and companies have already begun widespread tree clearing. Much, much more will be required for pipelines and new rail lines, endangering a host of protected flora and fauna.

Wouldn't it be crazy to say no to mining royalties and export income?

The Queensland Resources Council and the Queensland government like to talk up the benefits of mining and gas projects but we should assess their claims objectively. The mining industry says it will generate \$50 billion for Queensland but its activities require new rail lines, additional port facilities, dams to provide water to wash the coal and additional government services for enlarged workforces in regional areas. **This is all paid for by taxpayers.** The Queensland government boasts of its *Coal Infrastructure Program of Action* which will alone provide \$25.5 billion worth of free services to the mining industry. This should be deducted from any claims of income generation. Public money should be spent on public services like health, education and transport services — not on massive corporate welfare!