

Submission to IEPMC (personal details redacted)

Independent Expert Panel for Mining in the Catchment
Catchment.panel@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au

Hi, this is my submission,

I live at Otford, NSW 2508 only 6 kilometres from the Helensburgh, “Old Princes Highway boundary” of the Woronora and Nepean water catchment “Special Area.” Maybe that makes the issue particularly personal for me, because it is so close to where I live and I drive past it and look at it every day.

But the truth is all ‘drinking water catchments’ anywhere in Australia are there for every person, animal, flora, fauna including every minute ecosystem. The protection and preservation of our water catchment areas is equally important to everyone in Australia, whether you live 100 metres or 1000 kilometres from it.

The panel will have all the information available worldwide on water, drought and climate change. It is likely that in the coming years throughout the world, wars will be fought over access to clean drinking water, and the lack of water will cause mass migrations. There is therefore no need for me to repeat those well known facts.

I am a 71 year old retiree and like most other people, in my younger years prior to retiring I worked two jobs to save up to buy a house and then to keep up with the mortgage repayments.

I had little spare time so politics was something that I took little interest in. I naively believed that governments [politicians] at a state and federal level would at the very least look after the environment while managing the treasury budget.

I retired in 2010 and at that time I became aware that a gas mining company had been issued with an exploration licence to drill 15 coal seam gas ‘exploration wells’ in our local water catchment “Special Area.” Fortunately at that time a man, Josh Fox from New York, USA, produced a documentary titled, “Gasland” which related to “fracking” which was taking place near where he lived. The documentary arrived in Australia and alerted us to the danger it posed to our groundwater, land, atmosphere, human and animal health. I joined a local group Stop CSG Illawarra [SCSGI] and later the Illawarra Knitting Nannas Against Gas [IKNAG] which is now known as the Illawarra Knitting Nannas Against Greed.

The community fight began and so did my research into gas, coal and water catchments. For me the most important thing I learnt was that the politicians from both major political parties at a state and federal level are controlled by the coal and gas lobbyists who donate to their election campaigns and give jobs to ex politicians and staffers. How totally ignorant I had been prior to this awakening.

I and many other community members and professionals attended the Planning Assessment Commission [PAC] hearing re the gas-field licence at Helensburgh in February, 2013 and we gave written and oral evidence about our concerns as to permanent irreversible damage to the water catchment. The PAC later refused the companies application to extend the gas exploration licence.

You would think that would be the end of it, but the then [and now] Liberal/National NSW state government only put in place a “temporary ban” on gas-fields in our water catchment. It still remains, and there is no permanent ban on gas-fields in our water catchment.

Submission to IEPMC (personal details redacted)

Were it not for the community fight back then and continuing at this time, there would be today, many thousand of drilled coal seam gas wells pumping methane gas out and permanently contaminating our water catchment.

I and you are aware that longwall coal mining involves the use of large machinery deep underground cutting out coal in a space about 4 metres high and moving forward as it digs out and extracts the coal. As the machine moves forward the 'roof' behind the machine collapses to the floor. Thus the area above, all the way to the surface also suffers subsidence to some degree. You would have the data relating to the resultant sandstone splitting and the surface water the water in the creeks and ponds drying up and also destroying the ecosystems.

Chief Justice Brian Preston SC recently brought down his judgement in the Land & Environment Court in regard to the proposed Rocky Hill coal mine in Gloucester, NSW., when he refused to approve it. One of the arguments put forward during the hearing was the concept of a global carbon budget. Chief Justice Preston SC said the coal mine was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Q. How much water loss is acceptable?

A. None.

Q. How much subsidence is acceptable?

A. None.

Q. How much mining of coal or gas is acceptable in our water catchments?

A. None.

The state and federal governments should not be mining coal or gas in our water catchment areas. We have dams close to the mines and their integrity is also being put at risk.

On 28.01.2009 Barry O'Farrell the then [Liberal] Opposition Leader spoke to residents at a Woodbury Park rally on the Central Coast of NSW., in regard to a Korean company's proposed Wallarah 2 coal mine and he said, "The next Liberal National government will ensure that mining cannot occur here, will ensure that mining can't occur **in any water catchment area** and will ensure that mining leases and mining exploration permits reflect that common sense – **no ifs, no buts a guarantee.**"

Mr O'Farrell's Liberal/National coalition was elected to government on 26.03.2011 and failed to carry through with Mr O'Farrell's promise by continuing to approve mining in water catchments and still do.

It is time to permanently stop coal and gas mining in our water catchments; **"it's just common sense –no ifs, no buts a guarantee."**

Mining in our water catchments was always in the **wrong place, at any time!**

Regards,

Adrian Ingleby