



PROTECT FARMLAND AND WATER

NO NEW COAL OR UNCONVENTIONAL GAS

The Greens' plan to protect land, water, climate and communities

Coal, coal seam gas, shale gas and tight gas mining are making global warming worse, destroying valuable farmland, damaging our precious water resources and putting pressure on regional towns.

The rapid and destructive expansion of mega coal mines and the coal seam gas (CSG) industry across much of Australia demonstrates what happens when governments put big mining companies ahead of caring for local communities, the environment and our long term future.

With destructive plans starting to take shape for other unconventional gas mining like shale and tight gas as well, it's time for our politicians to stand up for what matters.

> GREENS' PLAN TO STOP NEW COAL AND UNCONVENTIONAL GAS MINING

Only the Australian Greens are prepared to stand up to the big coal and unconventional gas (coal seam, shale and tight gas) mining companies and act to protect our climate, precious farmland and regional communities.

In the next sitting of Federal Parliament, the Greens will again introduce a bill to give landholders a right to say NO to coal and unconventional gas on their land. This *Landholders' Right to Refuse (Gas and Coal) Bill 2014* will also BAN dangerous hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") for gas across Australia.

The Greens are fighting for:

- **no new coal or unconventional gas approvals;**
- **the right for farmers and other landholders to say NO to coal and unconventional gas on their land;**
- **no new coal or gas ports along the Great Barrier Reef;**
- **protection of our precious water resources including the Murray-Darling and Great Artesian Basins from overuse or contamination by coal and unconventional gas mining;**
- **independent, comprehensive measurement of methane emissions from unconventional gas wells so we can understand how damaging they are to the climate; and**
- **stronger environmental laws to better protect our natural environment.**

> PROTECTING VALUABLE FARMLAND AND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

The Australian Greens stand firmly on the side of Australian farmers. We want farmers to have a right to refuse access to mining companies on their land. Currently, under state, territory and federal laws, most landholders have no right to refuse mining companies access to explore and, then later, mine their land.



The Greens are the only party to realise that supporting our farmers and protecting our prime agricultural land and water is vital for our future food security.

> COAL AND UNCONVENTIONAL GAS THREATENS OUR LAND AND WATER

There are many risks to our underground and surface water resources from coal mines, and unconventional gas mining risks doing long term damage to our precious water resources on which much of our farmland relies.



The National Water Commission has stated that CSG mining is a substantial risk to sustainable water management given the combination of material uncertainty about water impacts, the significance of potential impacts, and the long time period over which they may emerge and continue to have effect.¹

Drilling CSG wells through aquifers to access coal seams risks creating connections between the two, potentially lowering as well as contaminating the water table. Extracting CSG, shale and tight gas regularly requires hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) - the high-pressure injection of millions of litres of chemically treated water deep underground, to force the release of gas. This can risk earth tremors and surface subsidence, alienation of good farming land and reduction in the quality or quantity of our groundwater.

There is still no long term solution to dealing with the tonnes of salt that are produced from the billions of litres of hyper-salty water extracted from the coal seams so that the gas can flow.



A recent poll showed that 75% of New South Wales voters oppose CSG exploration on agricultural land. A 2011 poll showed 68% of Australians want coal seam gas stopped until it can be proven safe for our environment and rural communities.

Coal mines and unconventional gas wells reduce rural communities’ access to land and threaten water resources. Coal and unconventional gas mining simply cannot co-exist with farming.

> CLIMATE CATASTROPHE

It is environmentally disastrous and economically short-sighted to expand fossil fuel industries as the fossil-fuel age comes to a close. Rather than expanding our dirty industries, rich countries like Australia should be leading the global transition to renewable energy.

The burning of coal for electricity generation is a significant driver of climate change. We cannot sustainably continue burning coal at current rates, let alone continue to expand the coal industry.

Industry claims that the greenhouse emissions from CSG use are around half that of coal. However, this does not count the fugitive emissions — methane that leaks into the atmosphere from wells and pipes. After questioning and pressure from the Greens, the Government tasked CSIRO with studying the fugitive emissions from CSG, but sadly, the study only had a small sample size and didn’t look at fugitive emissions during the fracking process. CSG could in fact be just as bad for the climate as burning coal. There are also serious questions to answer about the carbon footprint of shale and tight gas.

> GREENS’ TRACK RECORD ON COAL & UNCONVENTIONAL GAS

The Greens have been a strong critical voice against the coal and unconventional gas industries and we intend to continue our campaign alongside communities and Lock the Gate to bring a halt to the destruction across rural and regional Australia.

In 2011, the Greens introduced federal legislation to allow farmers to lock the gate against coal seam gas. The *Landholders’ Right to Refuse (Coal Seam Gas) Bill 2011* required farmers’ written consent before any exploration and drilling could occur – and a farmer could refuse that consent. The bill was debated on 22 September 2011 and was not supported by Labor, National or Liberal parties.

In 2012, the Greens introduced federal legislation to protect water from coal and coal seam gas mining. This added to the pressure on the then Labor Government and by 2013, the Greens, Country Independents and the community had forced that Government to introduce legislation giving the federal government the power to approve or refuse coal and coal seam gas projects that are likely to have a significant impact on water resources (the ‘water trigger’).

Without the community-backed campaign of the Greens and Country Independents, these changes to protect our water would never have occurred. The Greens also pushed for this water trigger to apply to shale and tight gas - but the old parties refused, leaving protection for our water from these new fossil fuel industries to the states.





Under Greens pressure, the Government also provided that this new federal 'water trigger' could not be handed off to the States. Tony Abbott is now trying to ram through legislative change to do just that, but the Greens have convinced the crossbenchers to stand with us and block this.

In 2013 the Greens re-introduced the *Landholders' Right to Refuse (Gas and Coal) Bill 2013*, and on 6 March 2014 the Labor, National and Liberal parties all voted AGAINST the bill. Only the Greens voted to give landholders the right to say no. The Greens will try again and give the old parties one final chance to listen to the community and protect our land, water and climate.



Aerial view of CSG wells in Chinchilla, Queensland

The Greens have also been campaigning for strong environmental laws that protect farmland, national parks and water resources from mining. Business interest groups have been using false claims about duplication to lobby for watering down of environmental protection.

> WHERE DO THE OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES STAND?

Tony Abbott stands side-by-side with the coal and gas companies. For a brief 24 hours in 2011, Tony Abbott backed the rights of landholders to say no to mining companies on their land. When asked further about this the next day, he retracted his previous support for farmers.

Tony Abbott is also trying to hand over federal responsibility for all environmental approvals, including approvals for coal and CSG projects under the 'water trigger', to State premiers. Putting state premiers in charge of unconventional gas mining would be a huge step backwards and would see more land, water and communities sacrificed. Water is a nationally significant resource that deserves national protection.

The National Party – once the party that represented the interests of farmers – has staked its claim on the side of the mining companies like Origin, Chevron, Santos and AGL.

The former Federal Labor government never rejected a coal mine or coal seam gas project.

Palmer United Party and the Katter Party oppose coal seam gas mining but still support coal mining on good quality farm land.

Federal and state governments, both Labor and Coalition, have been facilitating the mining industry with minimal regulation in the interests of quick profits ahead of the health and wellbeing of regional communities.

To the extent that state and federal governments are prepared to act on coal seam gas, it has been limited to temporary pauses, and to outer suburban areas (often marginal seats) like Western Sydney, leaving regional communities in the lurch.

Right now, the temporary moratorium on fracking in Victoria is facing an uncertain future after the coming State election.

Labor and the Coalition have truly misjudged the community's views on the rapid expansion of the coal and unconventional gas industries. Only the Australian Greens are prepared to stand up to massive resource corporations and act to protect our precious farmlands and regional communities.

> WE HAVE VIABLE CLEAN ENERGY ALTERNATIVES

Unconventional gas like CSG, tight or shale gas is a resource Australia does not need for domestic use. Australia's energy use is declining thanks to improving energy efficiency and rapid uptake of rooftop solar. The real driver of the unconventional gas expansion is the attraction of lucrative overseas markets. Profit for foreign-owned companies, not necessity, is driving the proliferation of the industry that threatens the long-term viability of Australia's farmlands.

Numerous government and independent reports show large scale renewable energy could replace our reliance on coal fired power – and create more jobs.



ⁱ National Water Commission CSG Position Statement (2012) <http://nwc.gov.au/nwi/position-statements/coal-seam-gas>