Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Sir/Madam

Coal seam gas represents a major threat to the Murray-Darling Basin.

The proposed scale of the industry across NSW and Queensland means that the cumulative impacts on rural landscapes, water resources, communities and the environment will be severe.

In the Namoi Catchment in NSW, the coal seam gas industry is posed to impact not only on the best farmland but also the best bushland, and it looks set to simultaneously degrade both our productive base and our ecological base.

Experience with coal seam gas exploration and pilot production in the Pilliga Forest, part of the Murray-Darling Basin, has revealed the following serious threats to the Basin:

- Saline water spillage leading to tree deaths, salt scalds and contaminated soils.
- Overflow of drill ponds leading to contamination of creeks.
- Potential de-watering and cross-contamination of aquifers, including the Great Artesian Basin.
- Discharge of treated water changing the ecology of local creek systems and reducing water quality.
- Use of large volumes of water for drilling and fracking, leading to increased pressure on water resources.
- Construction of major toxic water storage impoundments and associated environmental impacts.
- Toxic water storages left open to wildlife, leading to animal deaths.
- Clearing and fragmentation of high conservation value vegetation.
- Destruction of large areas of habitat for threatened species.
- Dramatically increased fire risk.
- Threats to important groundwater dependent ecosystems and wetlands
- Pipelines degrading important agricultural lands and risking high conservation value areas such as Travelling Stock Routes

If allowed to continue, the coal seam gas industry will:

- Transform rural landscapes into industrial zones
- Forever change the socio-economic profile of communities, with a fly-in/fly-out workforce that does not participate in the community.
- Undermine regional communities who depend on cohesion and resilience
- Represent a serious threat to water resources, including the Great Artesian Basin
- Result in farmers losing control of their land
- Provide property rights to miners rather then the custodians of the land
- Undermine the rights and interests of Traditional Owners
- Represent a health risk due to methane leakage and aquifer contamination.

We believe that, due to these serious risks:

- Coal seam gas extraction should be banned in the Murray-Darling Basin.

- It should be prohibited on prime farmland, bushland and anywhere associated with important aquifers.

- Landholders should have the right to veto coal seam gas extraction or exploration

Kind regards

Katie Ledingham