

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACTS OF UNCONVENTIONAL GAS

AUSTRALIAN
SESSION –
SUBCASE 5

SUBCASES

Right to Health
Health impacts

Right to food, water, housing
Infrastructure impacts

Right to safe, healthy, sustainable environment
Climate change impacts

Right to participation
Government subsidised pursuit of fossil fuels

Right to cultural heritage, land, resources, social
Cultural and social impacts

SUBCASE 5 – SOCIAL AND CULTURAL

The social and cultural subcase will examine

- impacts on communities, social services, roads, housing, property values and relations among neighbours.

TESTIMONY INVITED

- The following is a summary of the issues associated with this subcase.
- You are invited to provide testimony or witness statements supporting this subcase.

OVERVIEW

In summary the points the evidence to be presented includes:

- Evidence of Adverse physical or economic effects on families attributable to exposures associated with unconventional gas operations.
- Evidence of the health or well-being of families, including economic well-being, have been adversely affected as a result of unconventional practices.
- Citizens who are unable to work because their place of work is located in or near or usurped by unconventional gas operations
- landholders discriminated by their lifestyle, homes and work not being considered and their means to work being removed and their means of passing on the portion removed by the industry to the children

THIS INDUSTRY.... REPRESENTS A HIGHLY
COMPLEX SET OF PROBLEMS, MARKED BY
COMPETING INTERESTS AND INCOMPLETE
KNOWLEDGE OF CONSEQUENCES.

THESE CHALLENGES ARE SOMETIMES TERMED
'WICKED PROBLEMS'

(Rittel and Webber, 1973; Head, 2008a).

TRANSFORMATION OF PLACE AND PEOPLE

- The transformation of rural landscapes into industrialised gas fields profoundly changes the lives of the people who live there. But the gas experience is not necessarily stressful, and is not seen as undesirable by everyone. It depends on your perspective, and whether you are a gas field winner or loser.
- People who profit from gas mining tend to consider it a good thing. If they profit enormously, they think it is a very good thing. Company executives, shareholders, and employees see gas mining as their livelihood. The economic benefits ripple out to contractors, hoteliers, accommodation providers, sex industry workers, drug dealers, some property owners, and others who benefit financially.
- The people threatened by, or who suffer losses or injuries from, gas field development are most at risk of developing symptoms of emotional distress and physical ill-health.

WHEN YOU ASK THE PEOPLE

- “We have been forced away from our family life, our recreational life, our businesses and our farms as we have been forced to educate and inform ourselves about an industry forced upon us. We have been under unrelenting stress for the past three years and it has taken a toll. All members of my immediate family have found it difficult to reconcile our desire for our future in the area with the thought that if this industry proceeds we will be living in an industrialised wasteland. We have been faced with the heart wrenching prospects of our young adult children making the unthinkable decision of setting up homes away from this area. We are faced with the stress of not being able to make future financial plans for our farming enterprise and having to put on hold any agricultural development we had planned for.
- We are faced with the prospect of our farm being de valued and discussions with local real estate agents have supported this.”



where they “...made a conscious decision not to meet with local landholders and community groups.”

SOCIAL IMPACT

- The only report in 10 years
- The conclusion of the report was the same as it began, (the picture on the cover tells it all) it was all about how the ‘benefits’ of the industry must far outweigh any pesky impacts.
- No concrete steps to address or acknowledge the real impacts.



Review of the
socioeconomic impacts
of coal seam gas in
Queensland

2015

SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The general principles of SIA are now well established (e.g. (Esteves, 2012)).

- *SIA, ideally, is about: creating participatory processes and deliberative spaces to facilitate community discussions about desired futures, the acceptability of likely impacts and proposed benefits, and community input into the SIA process, so that there can be a negotiated agreement with a developer based on free, prior and informed consent. ... [T]here should be a specific focus on improving the lives of the worst-off members of society (Esteves et al., 2012, pp. 35, 40).*
- 2013 a political agenda to “cut red-tape for major resource projects to proceed in the state” included modifications to the Queensland SIA policy
- reduce the prescriptive guidelines- rather than a broad examination of social impacts, the guide now limits the scope of impact assessments to only those to be considered “high risk impacts and uses outcomes-focused measures, (not prescriptive conditions) to better manage the impacts of projects”
- SIA has been portrayed as an **obstacle to the expansion of the resource industry.**

BOOMS BUST

- \$800M p.a. plus thousands of permanent jobs and boom-time economic prosperity across the Surat and Bowen Basins.
- Unfortunately there was insufficient communication between the Unconventional Gas Industry, Local Government and the business investors on the timeframes for the development of the coal seam gas infrastructure and hence the development phase was completed well before the expectations of investors were realised. These towns are now experiencing a significant downturn in business, businesses are either collapsing or closing down and as a result there is a significant level of social disruption. This “boom & bust cycle” has left a significant financial and social cost in these small communities.

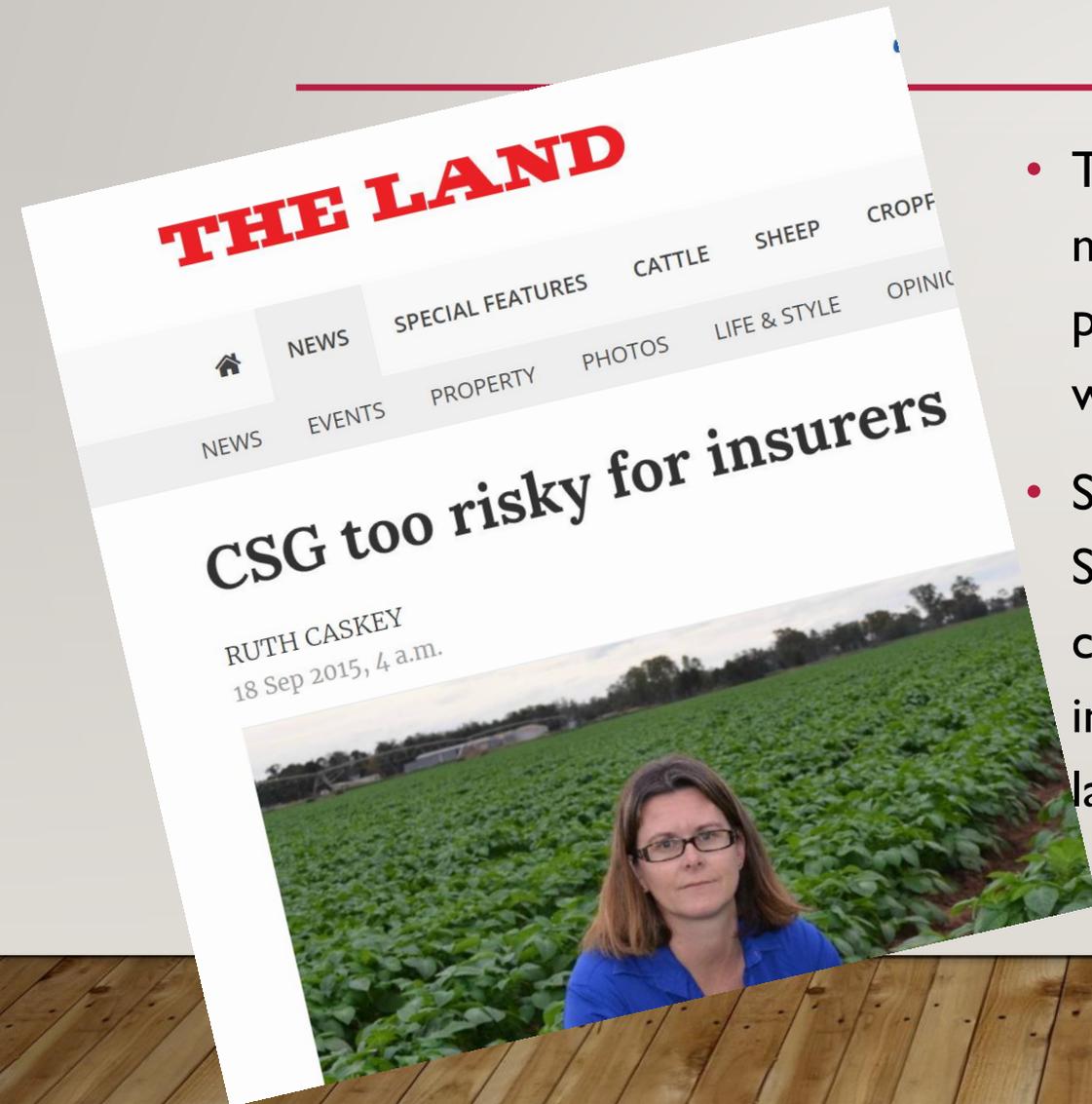
MENTAL HEALTH

- There is emerging evidence of negative mental health effects on farmers from coal seam gas extraction. Morgan et al. examined the contribution of coal seam gas (CSG) extraction to the global stress burden and mental health of 378 Australian farmers.
- They found that farmers' off-farm CSG Concerns (concerns about possible impacts of CSG extraction on human health, communities, and the environment) and on-farm CSG Concerns (potential CSG impacts on farm profitability, disruption of farm operations, and privacy) correlated significantly with farmers' self-reported levels of depression, anxiety and stress reactivity. Further analyses categorised farmers into four distinct segments based on their overall stress profiles. Farmers were either nonstressed (39%), finance-stressed (31%), **CSG-stressed (15%)** or globally stressed (15%).
- *Farmers in the CSG-Stressed and Globally-Stressed groups exhibited clinically significant levels of psychological morbidity.*

TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE LAND

- Mining, coal seam gas (CSG) production and associated developments have a range of impacts on Traditional Owners' country, native title rights and interests and cultural heritage which are often irreversible. Despite this, Traditional Owners have been consistently unrepresented and under-acknowledged in development assessment and approval processes... Effective and genuinely representative involvement in these approval processes is vital to maintaining, strengthening, and transmitting to future generations Traditional Owners' history, beliefs and their traditional laws and customs, in the spirit of the people.
- The extent and depth of the impact of the government actions and the industry on the indigenous aspect is an entire area of assessment in its own right and requires the story to be told by the first peoples.

INSURANCE



- The Land contacted multiple insurance brokers and three major insurance providers, but none could identify a product to insure against potential CSG contamination was available.
- Sydney-based environmental insurance specialist Anthony Saunders, EnviroSure, was the only insurance broker to confirm the lack of insurance covering the sector which includes the farmers, the explorers and the indigenous land owners.

NATIONAL VENDORS DECLARATION

- The insurance issues flow on to the animal health assurance implications for farmers.
- The responsibility is with the farmer that assure that the product that is supplied is chemical and contamination free.
- The gas industry setting up in the office of meat producers has implications for the farmer.
- The answer to this sticky situation is yet to be provided.
- The only investigation into this serious concern by the MLA the results of which were never shared
- After being handed legal advice, the peak body was asked not to share it for reasons of "legal professional privilege".



The documented effects on people living in close proximity to unconventional gas activities include:

- Distress related to concerns about adverse health impacts
- Costs associated with environmental damage and declining land values
- Increased stress and disturbed sleep patterns and concerns resulting from noise, air and light pollution. In initial drilling and fracking phases people can be exposed to this 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Industrial noise is known to cause a variety of adverse psychological and physiological effects (Passchier-Vermeer & Passchier, 2000)
- Social justice issues where families may be forcibly removed from their own land if they are trying to prevent gas drilling activities
- Having little control over one's destiny accompanied with financial hardship
- Interruptions to succession planning for farming families because of the future uncertainties in how much of a property will be developed for mining (Hossain et al., 2013)
- Anxiety over the saleability of farms, with mining either right beside a farm or CSG wells all over it, and diminishing economic returns
- Social divisions and inequalities between those who benefit from the industry and those who do not, due to adverse economic impacts on other industries



- Distress and disempowerment related to imbalance of power and influence between mining companies and individuals and communities over access to information and resources
- Significant distress, dislocation, disruption, and loss of 'place' if people have to leave a family farm when the level of industrialisation and pollution makes it untenable to live there any longer (Albrecht et al., 2007; Kia, 2013, cited in CAHA, 2013). The psychosocial and economic impacts on people in the wider community include:
- Changes to community structures, away from a close-knit farming community to a mining community with sudden increases and decreases in the population due to mining operations (Hossain et al., 2013)
- Housing shortages, reduced affordability and access to accommodation, and unattainable home ownership, due to a sudden influx of mining industry workers during the UGD operation
- Increased road traffic accidents due to sudden and significant increases in cars and trucks in the area
- Increased demands on local services, including local health services, without corresponding investment in infrastructure or human capital ((Colagiuri R., 2012); (Morrice, 2013); (Hossain, 2013))
- Disruption of current land-use practices and the local environment through infrastructure construction and access
- Workforce crisis in farming because of competition from the mining industry
- Solastalgia – the distress, disempowerment and grief associated with the destruction of loss of place as individuals and families are forced to accept the industrialisation of their landscape with gas wells ((Morrice, 2013)).

TESTIMONY INVITED

- This has been a brief summary of the basics of the social and cultural impacts of this industry
- Please contact us to provide your testimony regarding the impact of the industry on you.

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