



CSG is Choking Agriculture in the Surat Basin.

The Queensland Government is currently renewing the Water Plan for the Great Artesian Basin and Other Regional Aquifers (the GABORA Water Plan) Submissions on the Draft GABORA Water Plan closed on 17th April. The Basin Sustainability Alliance (BSA), which is a consortium of the Surat Basin community, lodged a detailed submission on this Plan. A copy of the BSA's submission can be found on WWW.notatanycost.com.au

Recently on the ABC Country Hour, Qld Resources Council Chief Ian Macfarlane in his inimitable style, used "Fake News" in an amateurish attempt to deny the serious impacts of the Coal Seam Gas (CSG) Industry on the future sustainability of the Great Artesian Basin (GAB). Mr. Macfarlane claimed that:

- The CSIRO had done "the science" showing that gas could be extracted without affecting aquifers adjacent to the Walloon Coal Measures.
- there was no connectivity between the Walloons Coal Measures (WCM) and adjacent aquifers - the Springboks and Huttons. and;
- the Walloon Coal Measures water is "too salty" to be used for Stock and Domestic and Intensive Animal purposes.

All of these claims are incorrect and misrepresent the true facts about water supplies for primary production in the Surat Basin. The Queensland Government's Office of Groundwater Assessment (OGIA) has the responsibility of managing the impacts of the CSG Industry on the underground water resources in the Surat Basin Cumulative Management Area (SCMA). OGIA has attempted to hydrologically model these massive groundwater impacts giving rise to their Underground Water Impact Reports (UWIR) . These reports attempt to quantify the impact of the CSG industry's unlimited water take on GAB aquifers across the 200,000 sq klm of the SCMA. They comprehensively refute Mr Macfarlane's erroneous assertions.

BSA Chair Lee McNicholl said "Today Ian Macfarlane will attempt to sell how well the Queensland Government policy of coexistence between the CSG Industry and landholders is working. Well from a thinking landholder's perspective in the Surat Basin- I can tell you it isn't". Mr McNicholl added "the UWIR 2016 produced by OGIA, shows that Agriculture, Industrial, Town Water Supplies and Stock & Domestic take of water from the SCMA is 52,635ML/annum compared to a 60,000ML plus/annum take by the CSG Industry from the GAB aquifers. This huge and unlimited doubling of the take of GAB water by the CSG Industry, has had, and will have a significant impact on primary production in the SCMA".

The Draft GABORA Water Plan provides for 35,055ML of additional unallocated water for new development in the Plan's area. Some 28,610ML or 80% of this unallocated water is State Reserve for major projects (mainly for gas, mining & power stations), 5,615ML or 16% is General Reserve water for agriculture and 830ML or 4% is Indigenous Reserve for Indigenous community projects. Within the Surat Basin (between Roma & Toowoomba) only 840ML of unallocated water is available for agriculture. The BSA firmly believes this disappointingly small volume of available unallocated water for agriculture, clearly indicates two things, namely:

- a) It is a clear demonstration of the Palaszczuk Government's current priorities of being pro the Resources Sector and not being supportive of agriculture. and
- b) It is also a clear demonstration that the unlimited take of GAB water by the Unconventional Gas Industry has severely impacted on the availability of water for agriculture in the SCMA and is in fact choking agricultural expansion and the development of new enterprises..

The BSA's Chair Lee McNicholl further added "that in excess of \$300mill of taxpayer's and landholder's funds have already been invested into the GABSI Program to cap and pipe flowing GAB bores and that in excess of 200,000ML/annum of water savings have been made from this Program. Given these water savings, the BSA is disappointed that primary producers in the GAB are not being afforded significant benefits from their past investment in the GABSI Program. It's a bit rich that the Queensland Government have given the major part of these savings to the CSG producers & Miners through automatic rights to take unlimited volumes of water, and primary producers have been left with a few crumbs. Successive Queensland Governments have been treating the GAB and other significant sub-artesian aquifers as a Magic Pudding. This unsustainable and inequitable treatment of Queensland's precious groundwater resources has to stop".

Mr McNicholl said the BSA is firmly of the view that there is insufficient water being made available in the General Reserve of unallocated water to meet the needs of primary production and that the CSG Industry has and will continue to choke agricultural production in the Surat Basin.

Lee McNicholl – Chair, Basin Sustainability Alliance. Contact Mobile:- 0427 626 461

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