



Gecko - Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council Assn Inc.

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Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Sent via email to: aec@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr. Chair and Committee Members,

Submission supporting the proposed legislative amendments proposed in the *Environmental Protection (Chain of Responsibility) Amendment Bill 2016*

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the legislative amendments proposed in the *Environmental Protection (Chain of Responsibility) Amendment Bill 2016*. Gecko- Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council Assn. Inc. (Gecko) is a not-for-profit environment association founded in 1989 and has been active for the past 26 years in protecting the environmental values and ecological sustainability of the Gold Coast, Queensland and, when appropriate, nationally.

Gecko is concerned at the extent of abandoned mines and minerals processing facilities across Queensland and recommends that the Committee supports the passing of the Chain of Responsibility Bill. Recently we have seen Queensland Nickel Refinery adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef and the Texas Silver Mine on the Granite Belt declare bankruptcy without completing site clean-up and without leaving adequate funds to complete rehabilitation. To date, there are 15,000 mines and other abandoned industrial sites in Queensland with a total clean-up bill in the billions, which will have to be funded by the tax payer.

Early evidence shows that the development of underground coal gasification and the roll out of unconventional gas (including Coal Seam Gas and Shale Gas) over thousands of square kilometres of Queensland has the potential for huge environmental damage. It is clear that companies' financial assurance or environmental insurance is unlikely to cover the extent of the damage when things go wrong. Presently, many mining and unconventional gas companies are facing financial pressure and risk going into administration. These circumstances make the *Environmental Protection (Chain of Responsibility) Amendment Bill 2016* necessary and urgent.

Gecko supports the "polluter pays" principle, where those that profit from exploiting the mineral resources which are owned by the people of Queensland leave their sites in a condition without residual environmental impacts. We welcome this amendment and urge that the legislation mandates extending the responsibility to cleaning up environmental impacts to all mineral processing facilities in the State.

Additionally, there is the issue of abandoned mines giving people a bad impression of the mining industry and governments tasked with regulation of the current industry. I refer the committee to an article by Corinne Unger, entitled ‘What should we do with Australia’s 50,000 abandoned mines?’¹ for further discussion on this. There is strong community concern about the possibility of the Adani mine, if approved, ending up being the biggest mine needing remediation. Concerns such as this are a by-product of a mining industry that has failed in its responsibility to the people of Queensland. As we transition to more renewable energy sources, it is important that the legacy of coal mines is a reasonably positive one.

In conclusion, we recommend the Committee supports all of the amendments provided for in the Bill.

Yours sincerely



Kellie Lindsay

Campaign Coordinator - Gecko



¹<http://theconversation.com/what-should-we-do-with-australias-50-000-abandoned-mines-18197>