

Agriculture and Environment Parliamentary Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane QLD 4000
By email: aec@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Environment Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 (EPOLA-UWM Bill)

I welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to the Agriculture and Environment Parliamentary Committee on the *Environment Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 (EPOLA-UWM Bill)*.

Whilst I generally support the proposed amendments of the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2014 (WROLA) in the EPOLA-UWM Bill, I am seriously concerned that the proposed Bill has not also deleted S.185(3) of the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 (PGA), which applies to anyone drilling for gas or petroleum and states - *There is no limit to the volume of water that may be taken under the underground water rights*.

The WROLA legislation was described as "shameful" and "an utter disgrace", by the now Deputy Premier Jackie Trad in Parliament in November 2014, she also stated that the WROLA Act "recklessly and irresponsibly deregulates water management and allocations in Queensland and walks away from decades of assessment and approvals of development according to the principles of ecologically sustainable development and could easily repeat the mistakes made in the management of the Murray-Darling Basin system right across Queensland".

I generally support the changes that the EPOLA-UWM Bill and the WLA Bill, also currently before parliament, make to the WROLA and applaud most of them. However, I believe that no resource company should get free, unlimited access to groundwater, it threatens groundwater systems and the environment and is unfair to other regulated water users. Currently I believe that the EPOLA-UWM Bill, and WLA Bill, are not truly effective in protecting agricultural water supplies and I would like to see the following additions to the EPOLA-UWM Bill:

1. the requirement for an "associated water licence" should apply whether or not the mine or bore is in a declared groundwater management area;
2. all resource companies should be subject to the same "associated water licence" assessment and licensing process for interference with or removal of groundwater, regardless of the resource being exploited; this would require:
 - a. the deletion of S.185(3) of the PGA 2004, and
 - b. the application of a common assessment and licensing process for interference with or removal of groundwater associated with any gas or petroleum drilling
3. any grant of an 'associated water licence' should be assessed against the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development;
4. resource companies should pay for all bore related expert assessments for "make good agreements";
5. there must be upfront consideration of the cumulative impacts on groundwater of proposed mining developments;
6. an independent Make Good Commissioner should be appointed to adjudicate disputes;
7. minimum standards and a Code of Conduct must be created and applied to "make good agreements";

Recommendations

I request that the EPOLA-UWM Bill is not passed unless it is suitably amended to at least:

1. revoke S.185(3) of the PGA 2004 and thus remove the current statutory unlimited groundwater extraction rights given to the petroleum/gas industries; and
2. apply the principles of ecologically sustainable development to the assessment and approval of “associated water licences” under the Water Act.

Yours Sincerely

Brynn Mathews

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