

05/10/16

Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
Sent via email only: aec@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

Re: Submission to Committee on Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to your inquiry into the Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 (**Bill**).

My name is Daniel Kenafake. I am a university student living on the Gold Coast and a firm believer in our society caring first and foremost for the environment. I do understand that mining is a necessary part of our society for many resources but I am entirely opposed to mining operations having access to free unlimited water due to many factors that impact us not only now, but well into our future.

There are many critical industries within Australia which rely on water to function, agriculture being a key example. The resource sector, particularly companies specialising in fossil fuels, already benefits from government handouts, tax breaks and subsidies while turning incredible profits. The fossil fuels industry has seen around \$12 billion in national tax-based subsidies yearly (2). A large portion of these profits end up overseas, avoiding Australian tax, providing little to no return to Australia (1). This industry, with its billions of dollars worth of profit, does not need free water. It needs tighter restrictions. A licence should always be required prior to groundwater being taken or interfered with. Public submissions and appeal rights to an independent court should have the final decision on whether the water usage goes ahead.

The proposed improvements to the bill by the State government are necessary. Any applicants for ground water usage should have to provide more information regarding the impacts on the environment, other businesses and private individuals relying on the water supply. I further believe that on top of having strategies for mitigating impacts of groundwater usage, money should be set aside as a guarantee and used only for this purpose. We have recently seen the sale of Rio Tinto's Blair Athol Coal mine for one dollar in an unfortunately effective attempt at avoiding the cleanup process and placing the monetary burden of cleanup onto taxpayers (3). If money had been guaranteed from day one, there would be rehabilitation funds available.

I see climate change as a key decision making factor for almost all legislation concerning resources, the environment and development. The management of underground water definitely needs to incorporate the changing climate and the widespread impacts this will have on water availability and its priority of use.

With the effects of climate change already posing a threat to our food security (4), droughts, extended periods of El Niño, and more frequent, intense weather events will put a strain on Australia and the entire world's ability to produce food in a self sufficient manner. Water plays a major roll in food security. Sustainable practices must be in place to ensure economic, social, and environmental stability. This includes an amendment to the bill so that the 'associated water licence' is assessed against the principles of ecologically sustainable development (ESD Principles). If we do not understand the likely results of proposed impacts sufficiently, we should not allow the activity to be undertaken. Beyond the need for food security, the natural environment exists in a delicate balance. Water is vital to the health of our ecosystems and I want to see a Queensland that prioritises the rights of future generations to food security, economic stability and a healthy natural environment both on land and in our ocean.

Yours sincerely,
Daniel Kenafake

FOOTNOTE

1. Australian Tax Office, Nassim Khadem, 2015. <http://www.smh.com.au/business/the-economy/half-of-australias-1300-public-companies-have-been-under-ato-review-20151216-glou3b>
2. Market Forces, 2016, marketforces.org.au/ffs/tax/
[information sourced from budget.gov.au, treasury.gov.au]
3. Mark Willacy, 2016. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-07-12/rio-tinto-selling-massive-queensland-coal-mine-for-dollar/7588916>
4. Ross Kingwell, Department of Agriculture (Western Australia) and University of Western Australia, 2006, Australasian Agribusiness Review - Vol.14 “*Climate change in Australia: agricultural impacts and adaptation*”, Paper 1, ISSN 1442-6951
[weblink: http://www.wantfa.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Climate_change_impacts_in_Australia_-_agricultural_impacts_and_adaptation.pdf]