



7 October 2016

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

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

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

Greenpeace Australia Pacific has a long history of campaigning to protect the natural environment and to ensure the ability of the earth to nurture life in all its diversity. We have been working to protect Australia from inappropriate industrial development and climate change. We welcome a number of measures in the current Bill that provide new protections for groundwater resources compared to the Newman Government's approach, but we remain deeply concerned by the prospect of resource companies having unlimited access to groundwater.

There are a number of positive provisions in this Bill that we support, including the strengthening of the initial groundwater assessment for mines under the Environmental Protection Act 1994. In particular, we support the 'transitional' provisions that ensure mines such as the Carmichael mega mine would require an associated water licence. This proposed mine has the potential to have a serious impact on groundwater and groundwater dependent ecosystems such as the nearby Doongmabulla Springs Complex and requires a high level of scrutiny. We believe such licensing and public submission and appeal rights need to apply to all mining and gas projects, not just existing proposals.

We strongly urge the committee to reject the proposal to create a 'statutory right to take associated groundwater' for mining companies and to remove such a right for gas companies. These licences must be required prior to groundwater being taken or interfered with and the public ought to have submission and appeal rights with an independent court making the final determination. Furthermore, it is essential that these licences be assessed against the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development. The impacts of developments on groundwater are often uncertain. Decisions need to be made using the precautionary principle to ensure that if risks to groundwater are not sufficiently known, the activity will not be allowed.

Groundwater is the lifeblood of regional ecosystems and communities and no resource company should get free and unlimited access to it while extracting coal or gas.

Yours sincerely,

Shani Tager
Greenpeace Australia Pacific