



We are a community group dedicated to
raising awareness about all threats to The Great Barrier Reef
and building support for better reef protection.

Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
Email to: aec@parliament.qld.gov.au

06.10.16

Dear Chair and Committee Members

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

Whitsunday Residents Against Dumping (WRAD) 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).

Whitsunday Residents Against Dumping (WRAD) are a community group working to ensure better protection and health outcomes for our Great Barrier Reef (GBR). A healthy reef means coastal Queensland communities such as ours have a healthy economy. We are however, also concerned about environmental outcomes for our land and water, our flora and fauna, and our landholders and indigenous communities.

As advocates for the environment, WRAD knows how vitally important it is for groups to have the right to speak up for our environment, as without community groups our environment has no voice. We want to ensure that all concerned communities retain objection rights for all mining proposals, as all mining poses very real threats of substantial environmental harm not only to our land, farms, oceans and reefs, but especially to our water supplies. All people concerned with the impacts of mining have a right to have their concerns heard by an independent court, free of political pressures, to ensure the best environmental, economic and social outcomes from mining projects. It is important to remember that mining resources are the public property of all Queenslanders, so these projects should be assessed with regard to the concerns of all Queenslanders who wish to have their concerns heard.

A clean, safe, reliable water supply is the foundation for all life to flourish. For regional communities and farmers everywhere, access to a quality groundwater supply is vital for survival. Resource companies should never be given favour over rural, regional and farming communities to water security and access.

Our key recommendations to the Committee are as follows:

- 1 The government should not allow the Newman Government's statutory right to groundwater to commence.
- 2 No resource company should get free, unlimited access to groundwater when extracting coal or gas, because it is unsafe for the environment and extremely unfair to other water users like farmers. It is undesirable, unnecessary and unjust to prioritise one industry over others. The current laws giving such rights to gas companies should be changed. A licence should always be required for mining water use - with submission and appeal rights to a judicial Court.



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3 WRAD supports the improvements proposed in the Bill to require stronger groundwater impact assessment for projects at the environmental authority stage. Operational, clean groundwater is essential to all farmers, communities and businesses in Queensland.

4 The government's proposal that mines obtain an 'associated water licence', if they have not gone through the improved groundwater impact assessment introduced by the Bill, is a positive one. This would mean the public submission and appeal rights would continue to apply to large, risky coal mines – precarious proposals like Adani's Carmichael mine - that pose serious potential groundwater impacts that might affect natural areas and landholders who depend on groundwater. Licensing should be required in relation to all mining and gas projects, not just older proposals, and the licensing needs to be assessed against ESD principles.

Yours Sincerely

Sandra Williams
Director