



Save the Mary River Coordinating Group

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Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee

Parliament House

George Street

BRISBANE QLD 4000

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18 December 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Submission to the Qld Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 (WLA)

The Save the Mary River Coordinating Group Inc (STMRCG) is a community based group whose members are dedicated to protecting and preserving the Mary River in its natural state. It has members from a wide range of professional backgrounds including expertise relevant to the issues required to be addressed in this Qld Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2015.

Please accept this as a submission to the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 (WLA).

We note the changes that the WLA makes to the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act (WROLA). However, we are deeply concerned about two very important amendments to the WROLA Bill which is missing from the WLA.

1. Revoke Part 4 of the WROLA.

The WLA should include an additional section which revokes Part 4 of the WROLA. Part 4 of the WROLA gives the mining industry a statutory right to take underground water and removes current requirements for the mining industry to get a water licence.

Part 4 of the WROLA will harm agricultural water users and the environment because it will:

1. Remove the requirement for mines to obtain a water licence for the vast quantities of groundwater that they generally extract during mining operations
2. Reduce the ability of the Qld Government to act transparently to prevent unsustainable levels of water extraction by mines during operations
3. Remove the right for adjoining landholders whose water resources will be affected or lost due to the mining operations to challenge the grant of a licence
4. Remove the role of the Land Court as final independent arbiter who can rule on appeals against water licences granted to coal mines

Failure to revoke Part 4 of WROLA represents a very substantial breach of the promises which the Qld Government made in the lead up to the election, when it promised to *'repeal the Newman Government water laws which will....allow for over allocation of Queensland's precious water resources'*.

Failure to revoke Part 4 of WROLA also breaches promises that were made by the Qld ALP to restore community objection rights against mining, because it removes the right of adjoining landholders to object to the provision of water licences to miners.

2. Failure to put controls on water take and impacts by petroleum and gas operations.

Currently petroleum and gas operations have a statutory right to take associated groundwater and a legal requirement to make good on affected water bores. As a result of this statutory right to take, there is effectively no limit to the volume of associated underground water that may be extracted by petroleum and gas operators, and this means that they have the right to draw down aquifers to any extent, no matter how severe, or to even dewater aquifers entirely.

Given the extent of proposed petroleum and gas operations (including CSG) in Qld, the short lived nature of the industry and potential irreversible impacts, this clearly is in conflict with ecologically sustainable development and controls to protect water resources from over extraction and pollution need to be put in place urgently.

Recommendations

- 1. We request that the WLA is not passed unless it is suitably amended to revoke Part 4 of the WROLA, and thus to prevent the granting of statutory water rights to the mining industry.**
- 2. We generally support other provisions of the WLA, although we believe that the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development should be extended to apply to the resources sector under Chapter 3 of the Water Act.**
- 3. We request that controls, on water take and impacts to associated ground water by the petroleum and gas operations, be put in place to protect water resources from over extraction and pollution.**

Finally, if any part of this submission is unclear, please contact the undersigned.

Yours Sincerely,



Glenda Pickersgill

President

Save the Mary River Coordinating Group Inc.

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