



Report to the Remote Area Planning and Development Board on coal/coal seam gas impacts on Central Western Queensland

Longreach Focus Group meeting 13 December 2011

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Key messages

- There is a lack of impartial independent information available on coal seam gas (csg) mining.
- People are distrustful of information from government and mining companies.
- Information about the science of coal seam gas and other mining needs to be written so it can be understood by non scientists
- More information is required and in a variety of formats to suit all learning styles. i.e. visual oral, hands on etc.
- The way csg companies work with landholders varies greatly. Some companies do it well. Some do it poorly.
- Participants expressed more concerns (negatives) about the emerging mining industry than positives though when probed a significant number of positives were discussed.
- Landholders said they do not have to sign confidentiality agreements and can negotiate with companies on some aspects of their agreement.

Recommendations

- A range of information on csg/coal mining needs to be provided in a variety of formats so people can better understand benefits and issues.
- RAPAD to facilitate the development of a standardised code of practice between all csg companies, communities and landholders in Central Western Queensland.
- Further independent scientific/research studies may need to be conducted that focus on the Central West and the Great Artesian Basin specifically.

Focus Group Meeting - Longreach

A focus group meeting was held in Longreach on December 13, 2011 as part of the wider research the Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) is conducting on perceived potential impacts of the emerging coal and coal seam gas industries in Central Western Queensland. The research is also examining information needs. Nine people attended from the following sectors:

- Agriculture
- Accommodation
- Transport
- Real estate
- Local Government
- Natural Resource Management
- Tourism
- Fuel provider

All participants lived in Longreach or just outside. Three females and six males attended and ages ranged from within the 30 – 39 years age category to 60-69 years. Most fell into the 40 – 60 age category.

Consent forms were signed and confidentiality and anonymity assured and for this reason the names of individuals (and other identifiers) have been omitted from the report. The focus of discussion centred more on coal seam gas (csg) exploration and development impacts rather than on coal mining because coal mining developments are centred more in the Barcaldine Regional Council area and proposed for the Blackall-Tambo Council area.

Focus groups are a qualitative research method and are useful to obtain a wide range of views and to explore important aspects of an issue. Essentially a group interview the facilitator seeks to draw out the full range of views on each question. For maximum participation it is recommended that 8 – 12 people participate in a focus group. (Dick 2002; Liamputtong 2011; Omni Research and Training ; Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook 2007)

This report documents participant's *perceptions* of impacts. If there are inaccuracies it is important to remember that this is a faithful representation of *perceptions* expressed at the meeting. Given the rapid emergence of coal seam gas exploration in the region and the lack of impartial information available (as noted by participants) inaccuracies may occur in some comments made in good faith. Participant's *perceptions* though are valid and reported accurately.

While there were some positives expressed more concerns/negatives were expressed even by those who may gain economically from the development of the resources industry in Central Western Queensland. The focus group meeting was held at night in order to suit business people's availability. With signed consent the meeting was recorded and a transcript written. The following report is written by the facilitator and based on the transcript. Participants have been given the opportunity to view the report and make any changes to their comments.

Nine questions were posed and each participant encouraged to give their views.

1. How well informed do you think you are about the emerging coal seam gas (csg) and coal mining sector in Central West Queensland?

Quite a few indicated they did not feel well informed, that there was not a lot of impartial information available. Some participants got their information from local print media (e.g. the Longreach Leader). This is in accord with the findings from the Market Facts random phone polling research conducted late in 2011 (Market Facts QLD. 2011). There was concern expressed about impartiality of information that came from government and resource companies though the local government representative made the comment that they (resource companies) were the ones doing and paying for the work done on the sites so it was "*fair enough*" to get briefings from them.

One participant owned businesses in South West Queensland and he was aware of the various views around coal seam gas and other mining in that area. He commented on "*emotional*" reactions (citing a recent letter to the editor in the Longreach Leader) but said given the lack of information this was not surprising. He mentioned getting information from friends who had experience with the mining sector including one who does "*prepping of sites and knows farmers who are struggling who are being paid \$100,000 a year just for use of the water*

from their dams through to other friends I have in xxxxxx[location] who are rabidly against it, to another mate of mine who is on the xxxxxx[location] who has spent two years working with one of the better companies and working with them rather than against them, and it's been very positive, to the other ones where there's anecdotal evidence of our bores losing pressure, and then through to the changes in social structure of xxxx[town] and all those sorts of opinions, I could talk to you for hours about that!!."

One participant commented that her family had a *"great relationship with xxx [csg company]."* She mentioned the company had Public Relations officers who had information on coal seam gas if people wanted it. She also said they had decided to hold field days on their property as so many of their neighbours were asking questions about the impacts and logistics of co-existing (agriculture) with coal seam gas mining. She also mentioned being bound by a *"confidentiality clause in their agreement so we can't – not that we know anything anyway, but we can't divulge what's happening on the well site."* She also said her husband felt that *"ignorance [was a factor] as in people not knowing what's happening, and you're scared of the unknown."* The field days were set up to counter the lack of information.

Several mentioned that they were not scientists and some of the information on impacts was very scientific and therefore difficult to understand unless explained for the lay person.

2. What are your main sources of information about coal seam gas and coal mining activities?

Comments on main sources of information included:

- The Australian (several) - one saw The Australian as a *"little bit more independent"* than other more localised print media sources
- Financial Review
- Courier Mail
- Local print media – Longreach Leader (several)
- Queensland Country Life
- Google alerts on coal seam gas
- Coal seam gas (CSG) companies
- Royal Flying Doctor Scheme (RFDS) workshop on Changing Times
- ABC radio
- ABC web site on csg
- Mailed out pamphlet on gas mining from Queensland Government – one participant bought a copy to the meeting

There was scepticism (and some comments along the lines of *"fair enough all companies advertise"*) expressed about recent television advertising promoting the benefits of csg by csg companies.

One made the comment that there was heaps of information “*out there if the individual person is willing to chase it up.*”

The impartiality of ABC was questioned by one participant (except for local ABC). One commented on the ABC web site on coal seam gas saying “*I found it quite useful... that there were facts and figures, but do we know if they’re right? I don’t know.*” This participant mentioned that the mining companies were refuting some of the ABC web site information.

That information was scientific and difficult to “*get your head around*” was reiterated by several.

Radio talk back commentator Alan Jones’ active stance against coal seam gas was mentioned. “*I don’t listen to it because it’s complete crap in my view, but that Alan Jones is on the radio every single day and every single day,..... from an almost illogical rabid point of view, in my view. I’ve listened to him a few times, and he just doesn’t let up; every single day, this is what he’s doing, and whether he’s got shares or something else!.*” The same participant said he thought he would influence many people because of the reach of his program and “*because of the style of local views.*” Another referred to Jones (tongue in cheek as) the “*Al Gore of the gas industry.*”

Not many in this group had watched the movie on environment impacts of gas mining “Gaslands.” One commented that the movie was not about coal seam gas but shale gas. The same participant said they’d been sent a letter by a company who intended drilling on their property for shale gas. One said he’d heard from someone in the resource/csg industry that “Gaslands” provided a “*biased*” message. “*They focussed on bores that were 100 years old. They really twisted it around to sell a message. The industry generally isn’t like that.*”

Discussion on the Queensland Government pamphlet titled: “Your questions answered: Coal Seam Gas and Liquefied Natural Gas included: “*I just think the Queensland Government information is one sided*” and “*But if you want information, you’ve got to have information from both sides.*” There were questions from participants about the geological differences between coal seam gas and shale gas.

When asked what information they would trust the response was: “*independent scientific reports.*”

3. Are you influenced by other people/group’s opinions/information on impacts? If so who? Which groups? (Who is shaping your opinion the most?)

There were a range of responses to this question and it may well have been difficult for participants to analyse at this point who actually is shaping their opinions. It was a question worth exploring though for its interesting responses in and around the topic.

Participants again expressed a desire for impartial information. *“I’d like to see some independent geological information and comparisons, so we could put the “Gaslands” into perspective, we can put the shale into perspective with our Artesian Basin, and with what’s happening underneath the Basin.”*

One participant said they were influenced by the companies they had dealt with. While previous companies had not been as informative..... *“To be honest, xxxx is the best company we’ve had, as far as information; they have consulted with us every step of the way. They go out of their way to consult with us, and it’s everybody, it’s not just the CEO or the 2IC. It’s every person from every office, from environment people, just every different department has been out to see us, get our opinions, get our point of view, ask us what we want. Anything we have wanted and had a problem with, they have just done.”*

Another commented: *“So, at the moment, until there is more clarity, I rely on people in the industry that I know that I trust, and I talk to people on properties and family down in that country, and to a very small extent, depending on the quality of the journalist and the media organisation, then I will do the Google thing and suss that out too..... There was an initial rush by the government who are addicted to the royalties in other industries, and they’re sort of the same with this, so they put the goal posts here. Some of the cowboys in the industry were getting away with – that’s my perception – they were getting away with things that they shouldn’t have been getting away with. Now, the goal posts may be being changed a bit; the good companies are responding to that, and I think that clarity may come and we can start to rely on some of that information.”* A further question was made on whether xxxxx [good company] were actually doing what they were said they were.

One commented that unless it was directly impacting on you i.e. a well going onto your property you may not have researched the issue very thoroughly yet.

One participant had taken resource sector company representatives around the region and had witnessed cooperative discussions between those companies and landholders. Another said he relied on print media largely. He was concerned about use of the Great Artesian Basin. *“You would want to make sure it’s being looked after properly before anybody drills anything into it. They want to know what they’re doing; that would be my concern.”*

One said he didn’t think anyone was influencing him but he did read a mix of media outlets.

Another expressed strong views about not all companies being as cooperative as the one currently drilling on their property. *“I think the other thing you’ve got to remember is that we have xxxx on our place, so we have a great rapport with them, we have a great working[relationship] with them, but not all gas companies are the same. I think that is the very important point to keep in mind, and if you’ve got somebody else other than xxx coming onto your place, and even xxxx, I’ve withheld signing contracts for months because I don’t agree what is in that contract. I’ve had lawyers onto them. You meet me and you do what I want you to do; this is my place, and that’s what you have to do. And they’ll do it; they’ll come to the party, but you have to stand up to them. It’s not just all beer and skittles; we didn’t necessarily accept the agreement as it originally stood. I think the mining industry has*

a lot to – not answer for, but things like – I know around Roma and those places, because that's where the lawyer that's handling the case for us, is based, and he said that the biggest problem down there is the companies insist on confidentiality right through the whole thing. I just refuse. I just don't think you should be bound and gagged..... telling people what you get for your compensation, and all that sort of thing. I don't find the grass roots of whether xxxx has got gas coming up at X number of square whatever it is, and you haven't; I don't care about that, really, in the whole scheme of things, whatever is there is going to happen; you can't stop it; you have to either work with them or you have to fight them. You won't beat them, you've got to try and find a way to go with them.”

This participant reiterated that they had not signed confidentiality agreements on the compensation they were receiving from the csg company. *“We took that out of our agreement. And they wouldn't sign, wouldn't sign. I'm not going to be gagged so that I can't discuss it with my neighbours or you or Freddy that I'm getting \$1000 per well and you're getting \$200. It just breeds.....discontent.”*

This participant also mentioned complaining when another company had started work using their access road and hadn't notified them.

“When xxxx [gas company] were drilling on xxxx, they were on our access road, and I came to town one day and they had graded all the pads – our access road – so we were shearing, so we had shearers coming in and out. We had xxxx[other gas company] using the same road, our access road, and there's a million trucks coming up and down it every day, and we've got shearers coming in and out every day, I'm trying to get to town. xxxx's [other gas company]well is about from here to that wall off the access road, so there is no signs up, there is no speed limit, you've got to come to a stop and poke along there in case you hit someone. So, I hunted them down and introduced myself and said who I was, and they said, “Oh yes,” and I said, “No one has contacted us to say[the work has started].That's our access road and no one's contacted us.” And he said, “Well, we haven't started yet.” I said, “You have so started. You've got heavy machinery out there and you've graded the pads and you've done this and you've done that.” I got three phone calls that night from whoever up in xxxx [other gas company] telling us that they were starting, giving us the exact date. Now, they ring us; if there's a rig moving, they ring us, if there's something else happening, they ring us, water trucks coming, they ring us. I'm over it now, I've made my point.”

Another participant who worked in agriculture said the same company were going to drill on their property but the only notice they had received was a letter in the mail. *“We've got xxxx[other gas company] coming to drill on us. We didn't sign a contract yet, but they don't sit well because you receive a contract in the mail; that's the first thing you know that you're going to get them on you. So, you receive a contract in the mail with a spot with where it's going to be marked on it, and sign the confidentiality agreement. You don't have to sign. There is no legal requirement to sign it, yet they try and get everyone to sign that, don't they? So, that's why people are suspicious. They just want people to sign that so they can't talk to other people, say I can't ring up xxxx [neighbour] and say, “How much are you getting for your site?”*

The other participant reiterated that they did not have to sign the confidentiality agreement and this participant responded: “No, you don’t have to, but they send it out and just say, “Sign this.” The other agreed saying: “And 95 per cent of the people will just sign it because they don’t know.”

“We got ours in about April last year and we still haven’t signed it. They haven’t come back to us. We received that in the mail, and the first contact we had was about six months later when a fellow came to me at work and said, “I’d like to talk to you.”

Another commented on different approaches by different companies. *“The difference in companies, at xxxx[town], we get on our block there, the difference in attitude between companies is amazing; the difference between say xxxx [resource company] and xxxx [resource company]; there is just no comparison. And we bought a little xxxx [business] in xxxx[town], and we were running that for a while, and the difference in the teams – we actually won the contract to look after the teams that were doing the drilling. Even the difference in the quality of the leadership of the teams and gangs is unbelievable. So, there is a major difference. And I’m just wondering this thing about information, whether the community would have better information pouring through if there was one change in the legislation at state level, and that was that if rural people had the same rights to negotiate as native title, that’s all it would take. So, the companies would then – the flow of information, that’s all it takes, a small change in the legislation that graziers would have the right to negotiate. They can’t stop them coming in, but it would force them to the table and they would be a lot more respectful of the negotiation process, so that the ability to work with them rather than have the worse end of the spectrum in relation to the relationship, I don’t know, it’s just a thought.”*

On the rights of landholders to negotiate: *“On worst case scenarios, some of these places, the properties can look like a bloody pin cushion, and they’ve got no right, but at least if there is a right of negotiation, it’s a lot more open. So, that, I believe, would improve that.”*

4. What do you think might be economic impacts for the region (both positive and negative)?

There was some overlap between economic, social and environmental impacts and I have documented what was raised by participants for each question. Economic impacts mentioned included:

- Difficulty in getting (and retaining) tradespeople/labour as mining pays higher wages and attracts labour that used to be available for local businesses e.g. tourism (boat driver), in agriculture and local fuel business
- Housing price increase (a negative for those buying but a positive for those selling and real estate agents)
- Rent prices increase (a negative for those paying rent but a positive for owners and real estate agents)
- More money coming into the community (if gas companies spend locally)

- Could be 15 years before full production occurs (and accompanying infrastructure built) – will be sometime before full economic benefits are experienced. *“So, the economic benefits won’t be felt greatly in this region for a fair while, and some of us will be able to get some advantage out of it, and that will probably be a positive because it will be a slower growth.”*
- Increased business for motels
- More jobs will be available in the region and better paid jobs
- Police being attracted into mining can create policing issues (social impact)
- Aviation businesses getting work from the resources sector already.
- Local government also struggles to recruit people when competing with mining.
- Some industries e.g. agriculture struggling therefore some landowners happy about the prospect of getting some assistance with property costs e.g. with grading roads, grids etc
- Compensation is paid to landholders with wells on their property. *“It’s not anywhere near what we get out of the wool and the cattle of course but it’s a help”*
- Increased business for fuel suppliers but getting labour the issue. Will have to pay staff more to keep them.
- Fears that a two class system *“like in Mackay”* will occur – those who work for the mines and those who don’t *“and the difference [in pay] is huge.”*
- One said he thought the economic prosperity of recent years in Longreach was possibly due to mining. Mining will have a *“massive economic impact.”*
- The real estate agent (jocularly) was positive about *“rents going up to \$800 a week”*
- The real estate agent commented that similarly to housing he thought agricultural properties might increase in value.
- Concerns about when mining ceases out here and real estate and other economic benefits cease.
- Some people will benefit and some won’t.
- Domestic staff (for example) may struggle to afford higher rent costs (social impact).
- Csg well has not impacted negatively on agricultural production (coexistence with a csg well)
- New infrastructure/maintenance provided on property from csg company i.e. grids, road maintenance, watering facility – dam and troughs and tanks off a dam the company uses, a cased bore which property owners will own/use later. *“Just anything we feel we need, they are happy to do.”*
- Concern that mining staff will book out all accommodation needed by tourists thus negatively impacting on local tourism businesses.
- Increased usage of roads can adversely affect local roads (although flooding was also mentioned as a cause) *“I guess too, what I think, we’ve got all these resources being ripped out of our country, why can’t we have better roads?”*
- Desire expressed for a mining tax to be distributed locally along the lines of the West Australian state government scheme called Royalties for Regions (for roads for

example). *“I’d like that logged I think that’s important. We’re seeing this country flogged for our future generations¹*

5. What do you see as the social impacts of CSG/coal mining for Central Western Queensland (positives and negatives)?

Social impacts mentioned included:

- Moving many temporary single men’s quarters into some of the mining towns in Central Queensland
- Opportunities for jobs (for *“our children”*)
- Confidence within the community
- The *“two speed economy”* a negative. *“The two speed economy worries me, and I know xxx said it’s great because your house price is going up, but if you’re a pensioner and your house is worth a fortune, you probably don’t want to sell it, yet the cost of living has gone up. It’s all very well to have that asset, but you have to sell it to get the money.”*
- Increased population in the region may bring better medical services
- Security/safety concerns - *“on a really personal social level, they want to drive past our house to get to where they’re going, and when you’re – my nearest neighbour is 10 kilometres away. It probably wouldn’t worry me that much, but sometimes now that the kids are a bit older, we’ll actually leave them at home on their own, and I don’t know that I would be prepared to do that. If you just don’t know the people that are driving in and out past your house all the time.....”*
- Rising rents *“It will be good for me [real estate agent] but bad for somebody that’s going to have to pay it. But good for the house owner....”*
- Rising real estate values *“there are other means in the financial world where you can access the equity in your house, and it is metered against the capital growth. So, really, that is something that some people probably – because those financial arrangements haven’t been in the marketplace for all that long, and they should be probably more prominently thought about to offset a growing value in your home.”*
- Difficulties in procuring and retaining labour *“the mines are sucking all the labour force from blokes that are operating small businesses here.....I can see it happening in the motel industry, in the servos, and other places, but say a butcher, he would benefit, I would think; there’s more people, more money, more orders.”* Another commented on this aspect: *“And all the wages in town will go up, there will be no more people working for the award, not that they probably do now anyhow, but it’s all*

¹ Royalties for Regions is an agreement that aims to support regional development in Western Australia. Through Royalties for Regions, the equivalent of 25 per cent of the Western Australia’s mining and onshore petroleum royalties is to be returned to the State’s regional areas each year as an additional investment in projects, infrastructure and community services. \$6.1billion is the estimated expenditure through the Royalties for Regions fund from 2008-09 to 2014-15, with \$1.2billion allocated to 2011-12. See <http://www.rdl.wa.gov.au/royalties/pages/default.aspx>

above the award now, I think, you can double or triple that again. So, that's the major negative, is just with staff, but everything else is a positive."

- Improved services - *"Might get better roads, better hospitals, schools might be better. So, there are all those sort of things to it. Longreach might get a few more people living here. If we've got an extra couple of thousand people living here, that's probably a good thing, I suggest. Might get two plane services a day."*
- Increased town size was discussed as a negative and a positive with some expressing concern about the small town lifestyle and culture being eroded. Also some concern was expressed about "undesirables" moving into the community who may not participate in community life e.g. P&Cs. One commented that: *"Mining towns are not always nice places to live."*
- Some mining companies provide funds for town infrastructure and leisure facilities etc and this was seen as a positive
- Opportunity to upskill local business people – *"so they can take advantage in the supply chain. If we tune the supply chain, then one, we can increase our local wages, which will allow people to remain – get better opportunities, create more jobs on a local basis, but still take advantage of the resources sector on our doorstep..... With that will come – xx [real estate agent] will still win, because as we will see in the short term, that people's expectations of housing will increase, instead of having the smaller homes that we have in Longreach now, people will start to look for more elaborate homes, four or five bedroom house, or one with a media room in it, that we're seeing over on the coast. But those sorts of things will come into Longreach because of a new generation of money coming into the region; you'll see people's living conditions increase."*
- Issues when mining/csg ceases in the region. *"The real major problem that we have in the future, that's when it all goes arse up, when there is no – if the Chinese decide, we're not going to buy your coal anymore because we've already developed our own resources; we don't want your gas. And that industry could take a huge tumble in a reasonably short period."*
- Service issues connected with population increase – *"I can see that if there is going to be a population increase here, there is going to be a greater need for schools, health services, policing, so obviously you're going to need more people in those sort of sectors, but then those people are on the lower wage bracket, so if the rents are going to increase, how are they going to afford to live out here, those government people in health services, teachers. So, that's a possible problem if it's not thought of properly."*
- Increased business opportunities for children and opportunity to stay in the community *"One of the very good positives is that local children are more inclined to do – buy a little business, whether it be a - once this is up and running, they can buy a little franchise, or they can buy a small business and they're more likely to succeed because of it, and they also are more inclined to do a university degree because they can work at home, whether it's in HR or engineering or whatever, because they can*

see direct benefits; they can live in their local community. That also is a very positive thing.”

6. What do you see as the environmental impacts of csg/coal mining for Central Western Queensland?

Comments on environmental impacts included:

- Misuse of the Great Artesian Basin (GAB) water. *“The possible contamination of groundwater aquifers and possible drawdown of the water table”*. Also mentioned was not knowing the science around the potential impacts on the GAB.
- Issues for agriculture - *there is a lot of shit on the liver in xxxx[area] about the oppression of farmers being, I can’t desal the dam, I can’t do that, and you’ve got to apply and it will take you six months to get a bloody licence to put a bore down to water bloody cattle, yet these companies can pump trillions of litres of water out and leave it lying on the ground, and then you’ve got to try and get rid of the salt. But I think we need to move on from that, but that doesn’t detract from the issue of this water being extracted; it’s very important, and you can’t understate the importance of the Great Artesian Basin”* to which another participant commented *“I think something to really balance that out is what’s happening in the coal seam gas sector, and the way that they’re managing that, and what’s happened for the last 100 years in the rural agricultural sector where they sucked out thousands and thousands of bores right across the Great Artesian Basin, and just let them run out into the channels to disappear into the ground, and there is less than 70 per cent of those bores have been [capped]. So, there is still more than 30 per cent of those bores are still sitting there running out onto the ground.”*
- Concerns about csg companies extracting *“massive amounts of water”*
- Concerns about waste products – including salt.
- Issues when one property has many wells *“I think the human environment, the relationship with people with their property, if they have too many, if they’re places that they can’t run now, and I know it’s not a big issue up here, but down when you’re starting to get 50 or 100 or a couple of hundred wells on their properties.”*
- Possible opportunity to recycle water being used in csg operations *“I think the other thing that they need to look at, if it ever gets big enough – there is no way in the world it’s big enough at the moment, but there should be some sort of recycling water, osmosis plant happening, so that water can be sold on, can be pumped back down, can be sold to the towns if there is a big drought, if there is whatever, can be used, because at the moment, it’s just evaporating.”*
- Some csg companies set up or provide funding for environmental projects e.g. through Landcare, weed control
- Rehabilitation of a local csg site was commented on by several and is reported to have been good. *“But I mean we were flat out finding where it was, so their rehabilitation worked on the sites that I went to.....Actually, they do a bloody good job.”* And another commented that *“They have rehabbed everything. They have rehabbed all*

the dirt, everything that they have disturbed on xxxx has been rehabbed, except the areas where they are still working, the actual wells themselves and the campsite, but anywhere where they've put a pipeline through, or anywhere else has been ploughed up and planted with Mitchell grass."

- Prime farming land to be protected. *"Culture is changing within the government; they're now bringing legislation in to protect significant farming."*
- Issues with contractors to mining companies not being vigilant about weed control. *"That's how we got our parthenium, the contractor that said he had his trucks washed, and hadn't, and it's just cost them [mining company] \$80,000 more plus – they just started another spraying program yesterday. But they haven't found any parthenium, but there's just an ongoing thing, they have to spray it every six months until we're happy there is no more parthenium coming up."*
- Concern that people don't know what the environmental impacts could be. *"It's always fairly unknown, and that's why I'd like to see some more sites and stuff myself personally, because I just would like to see the comparisons of other areas where work has been done where stuff ups had been made, where good stories are, because our structure underneath us, do we all know what it's like? The average person wouldn't have a clue. And I think it might help give a bit more confidence to people. It might take it away too."*
- Suggestion that the use of Great Artesian Basin water be highlighted during the discussions around mining so that all bores off it become capped. *"So, perhaps there is an opportunity from this to get things like that done because it's highlighting how important the Great Artesian Basin is, but it needs a champion to run with that, but there is no reason it can't be done..... we're talking about carbon credits, what about Artesian Basin credits where they cap some bores for the water that is actually evaporated for gas."*

7. What information would you like to see made available about csg/coal mining in Central Western Queensland? (what mediums, speakers specific info?)

Several reiterated the need for independent scientific information. *"You really need to know where the science is in terms that people can understand, and maybe that's where we need to go is to get a really good scientific picture from every angle."*

Comments on what type of information participants would like to receive included:

- A public debate
- Seeking consensus from any public debate
- Good speakers on all aspects of the impacts of mining.
- Information from state government is not trusted. *"There used to be a role – all that information from all those different angles used to be filtered and disseminated through the government departments that would provide us with the information. There is a lack of trust, I think, for the state government at the moment – I'm not saying that it's the Labor Party, I'm just saying that the bureaucracy have become*

obsessed and addicted to the royalties and.....there is a general feeling in the community, certainly in the motels and you talk across entire socioeconomic backgrounds, people just don't trust the stuff that's coming out, what normally would have been trustworthy coming out of the department."

- Possible role for local government or RAPAD to provide independent balanced information.
- Comment that CSIRO was "*not apolitical*" though others saw them as a possible source of independent creditable information.
- Universities were suggested as independent sources of information though one participant challenged this as well.
- Need to supply information in a range of mediums and then market it. "*I think there is two factors: we need to collate the stuff and put it in a believable form and sourced by the right resources, and then we'll need a fairly good marketing campaign to actually bring it out of the different mediums, because some people like going in to hear people speak, and some people like to read and some people like to get on the internet. So, it's going to mean a whole campaign to actually roll it out. "*

8. Do you think your opinion could change if you had more information?

Most said yes it could change. One participant said it depended on the information she got as she had said before she didn't trust the information coming from the mining companies or government and had a good example where two resource company people she had asked how much water they used in a csg mining operation gave two completely different answers. Her point was "*who do you trust? How can you trust what they are saying?*"

References

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Omni Research and Training *Toolkit for Conducting Focus groups*, Omni Research and Training, Colorado, <<http://www.omni.org/docs/FocusGroupToolkit.pdf>>.

Stewart, DW, Shamdasani, PN & Rook, DW 2007, *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*, vol. 20, Applied Social Research Methods Series, SAGE Publications, London.

Appendix 1 Invitation



INVITATION TO ATTEND FOCUS GROUP MEETING ON IMPACTS OF COAL SEAM GAS AND COAL MINING ON WESTERN QUEENSLAND

You are invited to attend a focus group meeting to discuss your general impressions of positive and negative impacts of the emerging coal seam gas and coal mining industries in Central Western Queensland. You have been chosen as someone who would have valuable input into such a discussion. The meeting will be recorded and used as part of a wider project the Remote Area Planning and Development Board is conducting on regional impacts and information needs.

A light meal will be served at the start of the function.

Date: Tuesday 13 November

Where: Fairmont Room, Civic Centre, Longreach

Time: 6.30 – 8.30pm

For further information and to RSVP please contact Chris Capel by phone on 46589424 or by email on capel@tpg.com.au

Appendix 2 – email reply from invited participant from the agricultural sector who could not attend the focus group but sent a list of concerns.

4/12/11

Chris,

Thanks for the invite to the focus group but will not be able to attend. I am very concerned, however, about issues with CSG & Coal exploration and extraction being;

- Possible effects to our underground water resource
- Land access; disruption to our operations, introduction of weeds, disturbing livestock, reducing production
- Unpaid time involved in negotiating and monitoring with mining companies and their contractors
- Mental stress involved and effect on physical health
- Industry funds being spent to defend our rights against the mining industry
- Fees being paid to law firms & consultancies, some of whom are proving to be incompetent
- Government guidelines that seem to favor mining companies leaving landholders short on negotiating power.
- Forward sales of CSG gas, is Australia exporting energy too cheap?
- Australia cannot compete on the global labor market, our advantages are energy, resources and agriculture, are we exporting those advantages?
- Roads that are inadequate for existing use that will have to cope with much greater pressure.
- Higher requirement for other infrastructure & services; hospitals, police, local government & emergency services.
- 30% of the state royalties should come back to the regions where the royalties are generated to support infrastructure & services.
- Effect on the local labor market; there is already a critical shortage of labor in rural areas.
- Longer term sustainability of mining; are we becoming too reliant on mining to support our living standards?
- Mining and gas extraction takes place in rural and regional areas and yet the profit mostly ends up in the big cities, royalties end up in government coffers most of which is spent supporting living standards in the cities. Those cities don't produce much, they consume. Rural & regional areas should be rewarded for what they are producing.

Regards,