



IM15/7880
MF15/1765

Sister Margaret Hinchey RSM
Social Justice Committee
Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes NSW
PO Box 259
ROSEBERY NSW 1445

Dear Sister Hinchey RSM

Re: Coal Seam Gas Exploration

I refer to your letter of 4 March 2015 to the Premier, the Hon Mike Baird MP, regarding coal seam gas exploration. The Premier referred your correspondence to the Minister for Resources and Energy, the Hon Anthony Roberts MP, as the matter falls within his portfolio responsibilities. Minister Roberts has asked that I respond on his behalf as the Government has now entered the caretaker period prior to the coming NSW election.

The NSW Government recognises that some communities are concerned about the health impacts of coal seam gas activities. For this reason, the Government asked the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer, Professor Mary O'Kane, to undertake an independent review of coal seam gas related activities in NSW, with a focus on the impacts of these activities on human health and the environment.

In her initial report, the Chief Scientist noted that those studies which have been conducted on the impact of gas activities on human health are often inconclusive and do not provide firm evidence of correlations and causality with coal seam gas activities.

On 30 September 2014, the Chief Scientist released her Final Report of the Independent Review of Coal Seam Gas Activities in NSW and her report on managing environmental and human health risks from CSG activities.

The Government was pleased to see that through appropriate measures, the technical challenges and risks posed by the coal seam gas industry can, in general, be managed through strategic resource management, high technical standards, comprehensive monitoring, and improvements to environmental data collection and the publication of that data.

The Government will adopt all the recommendations made by Chief Scientist in her Final Report.

In the meantime, the Government has been active in putting in place the most comprehensive regulatory controls for the coal seam gas industry in Australia to limit

the impacts of these activities on surrounding land, the environment and the health of humans and wildlife. These controls include:

- a two-kilometre exclusion zone around residential and village areas
- banning the use of harmful BTEX (benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene compounds) chemicals
- banning evaporation ponds
- having an independent regulator, the Environmental Protection Authority, as the lead regulator of environmental and health impacts of coal seam gas activities in NSW
- introducing an Aquifer Interference Policy
- Codes of Practice for Well Integrity and Fracture Stimulation.

The Independent Expert Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development has been charged with providing advice on chemicals, the environment and human health to the federal Environment Minister. You can find more information, including updates on this work by visiting www.environment.gov.au/coal-seam-gas-mining/research/index.html.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Damon Anderson', written over a horizontal line.

Damon Anderson
Acting Director
Office of Coal Seam Gas