

Date

Name  
Address  
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Dear X

I write to you enclosing a brochure highlighting a very significant issue currently facing the Hunter Valley – Australia’s oldest and most visited wine region – which is the proliferation of coal seam gas mining (CSG).

With Petroleum Exploration Licences (AGL’s PEL 267, which is up for renewal on 19 January 2012, and PEL 4) already covering most of the Hunter Valley, the threats of CSG mining on the wine / tourism areas are very real. As demonstrated overseas, CSG mining can cause irreversible, long term damage to underground water aquifers; generates huge amounts of saline mining waste; releases fugitive methane emissions; causes aesthetic destruction of the natural landscape; impacts negatively upon property values; and has the potential to stem the flow of the many hundreds of thousands of domestic and international visitors that travel to the region each year.

The Hunter Valley is home to some of the oldest and rarest grape vines in the world and since the first plantings in 1823, the region’s combined viticulture and tourism industries have grown to provide close to 50,000 direct and indirect jobs, and deliver \$1.8 billion annually to the NSW economy.

If protected, the region can continue to deliver strong returns for many, many more generations to come. Compare this to Australia’s coal seam gas industry, which may not only cause irreversible devastation to the landscape - both environmentally and aesthetically – but has a life expectancy of only ten to fifteen years.

Authors of the interim report from the Federal Senate Inquiry into CSG mining (released November 2011) concur with this assertion, stating Australia’s CSG industry is a “relatively short-term prospect” – one that may not be worth the cost to agriculture and the environment.

The Hunter Valley Protection Alliance (HVPA) – whose members include Hunter Valley residents and their supporters, representatives from the Hunter Valley Wine Industry Association and Hunter Valley Wine Country Tourism – is seeking the support of all members of NSW Parliament to protect this prosperous and internationally recognised wine tourism region.

Both the South Australian and Western Australian governments are aware of the impact mining would have on their high-yielding wine tourism areas (including The Barossa, McLaren Vale and the Margaret River), and have moved to ‘ring fence’ them from any future industrial over-development. In light of the many millions of dollars the Hunter Valley wine and tourism industries deliver to the NSW economy each year, the HVPA feels a similar move is something which should be given serious consideration here too.

On 8 November 2011, iconic winemaker Bruce Tyrrell delivered an 11,000 strong petition to NSW Parliament, saying ‘NO to CSG in the Hunter Valley’. This petition was supported by a raft of legendary Australian winemakers whose vineyards lie within the region (please find list attached).

On behalf of the HVPA, I implore you to join these wine legends and call for the protection of the Hunter Valley from the proliferation of coal seam gas mining and all forms of industrial over development.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to consider this issue.

Yours sincerely,



Graeme Gibson  
Hunter Valley Protection Alliance