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Protect the Bush Alliance (PTBA) is an alliance of 22 NGOs and community groups in Queensland and Australia representing over 30,000 people. Our goal is to implement ways of preventing the continuing loss of areas of high conservation values to inappropriate development. One of the ways we do this is by conducting flora and fauna surveys on properties of high conservation value and on the properties which link them.

Members of PTBA have had, and will continue to have, close association with many land holders and communities affected by the major resource developments planned for Queensland, as and when those developments strategically impact on areas of biological significance and diversity.

Independent review of the 'water trigger' legislation

<http://environment.au.citizenspace.com/environment-standard-division/wtreview>

The aim of this review is to identify the questions that need to be considered regarding the efficiency of the water trigger in protecting water resources. Firstly, it asks what have been the additional administrative compliance and delay costs, arising for the water trigger that have affected businesses and communities.

In answering this question members of PTBA feel strongly the resource sector must bear these costs fairly during the progression of their industry throughout Queensland. If they do not, the burden will fall to the future tax payers of this state. The existing discriminates in favour of the resource sector which enjoys unfettered access to water with no volumetric charge applied. Conversely, agricultural industries require a license for use; are limited to percentage of rainfall collection; and pay according to consumption. Predictably, the resource sector is instrumental in diminishing the importance of the federal Water Trigger. This imbalance is in itself is a matter of grave concern.

The continuing safety and security of water in Australia is a matter of national concern. This will only increase as we witness the possibility of more prolonged droughts due to climate change. Water sources like the Murray Darling Basin and the Lake Eyre Basin, are of fundamental importance to the continent, the natural landscape, agricultural industries and communities.

These miraculously ancient waters are not being replaced at their current level of extraction - a scenario likely to severely impact future food production for the people of Australia.

The Amendment Act established the protection of water resources from coal seam gas and large coal mining developments as a matter of national environmental significance (MNES), passing through the Australian parliament on the 19th of June 2013. Allowing the Minister for Environment to set conditions as a part of a project approval is today, every bit as relevant and essential as it was identified to be in June 2013. It is regrettable these legislative powers precluded many small projects – the cumulative effect of which, are equally destructive of water courses.

We cite the case of **The Colton Mine (Colton Coal Pty Ltd Client 641079)** at Aldershot, north of Maryborough in Queensland.

Re: Application for An Environmental Authority for Non Code Compliant Level 1 Mining Project (ML50273 and ML50274) The EIS decision was made by DERM in accordance with section 163 of the Environmental Protection Act 1994 (EP Act). In March 2010 the Colton Mine was advised it may progress under an Environmental Authority. Mine waste water identified by the proponent as 'not suitable for stock or agricultural purposes', would be discharged by pipe line directly to the estuary of the Susan River flowing to the estuary of the Mary River.

This estuary system is part of The Great Sandy Straits RAMSAR site. An estimated 730ML per annum of surplus water that is expected to be generated, will flow to prescribed high environmental value waters. Dewatering may also impact on dependent wetland ecosystems classified as 'referable wetlands'.

Further the case of the **North East Gas Interconnector (NEGI) Permit Number EPPG03497815 Tennant Creek to Camooweal in Queensland. Schedule B – Protecting environmental values notes:**

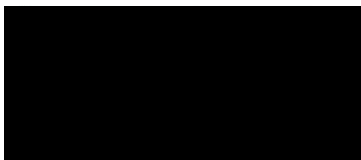
(B4 a) Petroleum activities must firstly avoid, then minimize, then mitigate any negative impacts on areas of vegetation or other areas of ecological value.

Inevitably pipe line construction adversely affects the hydrology of creek and river systems. Unsatisfactorily, the development of associated infrastructure that is not part of the extraction process, is not included in the definitions of 'coal seam gas development' or 'large coal mining development. This includes the construction of associated amenities drawing large amounts of water from other eco-system services, throughout remote and regional Queensland. The states do not possess the processes to assess, prevent and mitigate such impacts. Furthermore, we recommend that all unconventional gas mining, shale and tight gas, as well as CSG, be covered by the water trigger.

In conclusion, the Water Trigger came in to being to protect our natural systems from the profligate and indiscriminate use of water. The Water Trigger must remain every bit as important to the EPBC Act in to the future, as it was when it was established.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely



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