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I am writing about the threat and very real long-term risk to the pastoral and agricultural industries of Australia if the Coal Seam Gas is permitted to go ahead. The water systems of the Great Arterial Basin sustain the rural life of our country and once contaminated can never be fixed.

During the recent major drought all freshwater dams and running creeks were totally dry on my family's sheep, cattle and wheat-farming property in the central west of New South Wales. Without our seven artesian bores there would have been no drinking water for all livestock and no water for domestic use and needs. On a national as well as domestic level this situation would have been catastrophic.

No employment offers and opportunities offered by Santos could possibly make up for the loss of employment in all areas of Australian agriculture and all its associated industries. There is no possibility of eliminating the risk of future earthquakes, however unexpected – examples are the huge one at Newcastle in 1989, and more recent tremors at Gunnedah and the Pilliga region. The loss of uncontaminated water due to the cracking or bursting of cemented pipes would be as disastrous to the economy of Australia as it would be to individual farms and their associated industries such as shearing and harvesting, and to the associated communities of local country towns.

I go so far as to beg you, not just as a landholder but as an Australian citizen, not to hesitate in rejecting this threatened risk of unremediable disaster. I sign on behalf of all Australian farmers, landowners and rural industries and all country towns and communities dependent on the vital supply of uncontaminated i.e. usable water, and enough of it, from our great subartesian basin.

(Mrs) Annette Irving

