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Introduction - Special Edition: The Economic and Social Policy Implications of the Coal Seam Gas (CSG) Industry in Australia

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Introduction - Special Edition: The Economic and Social Policy
Implications of the Coal Seam Gas (CSG) Industry in Australia

The Journal of Social and Economic Policy

Special Edition: The Economic and Social Policy Implications of the Coal Seam Gas (CSG) Industry in Australia

Coal Seam Gas (CSG) as an energy source has been, and continues to be, a highly contentious issue both within Australia and overseas. Despite the CSG industry being in operation within Australia for close to 15 years (Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association (APPEA), 2013) it is only within the past three to four years that considerable attention has been focused on the actual and proposed expansion of the industry in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. During this period, the debate over the economic, social and environmental benefits and costs of the CSG industry has intensified and become both heated and highly polarised.

It is hoped that this special edition will stimulate debate in an area where relatively little published research currently exists.

The edition opens with an article by CSIRO Ecosystem Sciences researchers Dr Andrea Walton, Dr Rod McCrea, Dr Rosemary Leonard and Dr Rachel Williams titled: *“Resilience in a Changing Community Landscape of Coal Seam Gas: Chinchilla in Southern Queensland”*. This article focuses on the views of the Chinchilla community to a rapidly changing social and economic environment as a result of the CSG industry. The town of Chinchilla in Queensland lies within the Darling Downs Region and over the Surat Basin, currently the major source of CSG in Queensland. The community response to the changes from CSG has allowed the authors to measure the level of the resilience within the community. The research intention is to assist communities facing CSG development to build resilience and also to enable policy makers to better support communities to cope with the impacts from large scale development.

The second article by Dr Kim de Rijke from the University of Queensland’s School of Social Science takes an anthropological view to examine the social impact of the CSG industry upon residents of the Darling Downs region. *“Coal Seam Gas and Social Impact Assessment: An Anthropological Contribution to Current Debates and Practices”* examines disputes about CSG through the lens

of anthropological theories on social dynamics and the concept of community. Through this lens the author examines issues of land use, employment, fly-in-fly-out workers, and the efficacy of Social Impact Assessments (SIA) using data from both desktop research and ongoing fieldwork.

Aidan Ricketts, from the School of Law and Justice at Southern Cross University has contributed, **“Investment Risk: An Amplification Tool for Social Movement Campaigns Globally and Locally.”** Ricketts details the impacts of social movement campaigns upon corporate decision making and investment with specific focus on the campaign against the coal seam gas industry within Northern New South Wales. The author looks at the growth of social movement campaigns against the fossil fuel industry globally, as well as the evolution of corporate campaigning.

Authors Cindy Chen and Professor Alan Randall from the Faculty of Agriculture and Environment at the University of Sydney have contributed **“The Economic Contest between Coal Seam Gas Mining and Agriculture on Prime Farmland: It May Be Closer than We Thought.”** A benefit-cost analysis (BCA) framework is used in this research to assess the absolute and relative economic net benefits of both the CSG industry and the agricultural industry within the Darling Downs Region in order to determine both the potential of each industry, and the costs and uncertainties that accompany them.

The final article for this special edition looks at the contribution a regional university made in helping a Local Government Authority determine a community’s view of the development of the coal seam gas industry within its boundary. In September, 2012, at a Local Government Election within the electorate of Lismore, New South Wales, 86.9% of voters answered *No* to the question *Do you support coal seam gas exploration and production in the Lismore City Council area?* The implications of this result for both government policy and for the coal seam gas industry are discussed along with details regarding the process of designing and implementing the poll and evaluating the stakeholder relationships. The article **“Developing the Lismore CSG Poll – A University/Local Government Collaboration”** was contributed by Hanabeth Luke, Dr Kristen den Exter, Professor William Boyd, Associate Professor David Lloyd and Ben Roche from Southern Cross University.

I trust that readers enjoy this special edition examining the economic and social policy implications of the CSG industry in Australia. It is hoped that the contributions enhance the understanding of the issues surrounding the CSG industry in Australia, and that it encourages further discussion, debate and understanding of a very contentious issue.

I would like to thank all of the contributing authors and the reviewers for their work and input into this special edition. I would also like to thank JESP Assistant Editor, Amanda Shoebridge, for her efforts in coordinating this issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Buultjens', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Associate Professor Jeremy Buultjens,

Managing Editor

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