

*“The erosion of private property rights is the single biggest issue facing the rural community. It creates uncertainty, stifles investment, job creation and threatens incomes and service delivery.”*

## **Darling Downs Prime Agricultural Land Under Serious Threat**

Channel Ten's The Project airs its latest news story documenting consistent and reprehensible behaviour by Royal Dutch Shell/PetroChina's joint venture company, Arrow Energy and its Dalby Expansion & Surat Gas Project in the Darling Downs wheat belt farming country, Queensland. <https://10play.com.au/theproject> .

In 2016 the Senate Committee for Unconventional Gas (Bender Inquiry) recommended that the Commonwealth Government works with states and territories to develop a national strategy to manage the conduct of Unconventional Gas Mining in Australia.

Fast forward to 2021 and agriculture has become a prime target in the Morrison's Government's Net Zero commitments, casting aside the future security of Australia's water and food, to ensure a methane gas future well beyond 2050. To get the gas out, these resource giants extract huge amounts of Australia's precious underground water, setting off a complex chain of environmental events and impacts.

On the Darling Downs, farmers are all too aware that the extent and consequences of the gas industry risks are still yet to be understood, as Australia's unconventional gas industry is still in its infancy, and the science (and regulation) is still catching up whilst the methane gas industry is powering ahead. One thing that keeps farmers up late at night is how the methane gas industries (coal seam) infrastructure will remain beneath our farmland forever. Any small residual leakage of methane gas in plugged wells will corrode the underground infrastructure, meaning further contamination of Australia's soil and water for an unspecified period.

The Queensland State Government continues to ignore the unrelenting and increasingly desperate pleas from the farming community of the Darling Downs who are requesting a stop to all coal seam gas activity by Royal Dutch Shell/PetroChina's joint venture company, Arrow Energy. Whilst the Darling Downs rich and productive black soil districts of Ducklo, Kupunn, Springvale, Grassdale and Cecil Plains are in the midst of a battle for their future with Royal Dutch Shell, PetroChina and Arrow Energy (Surat Gas Project), there is a deafening silence from Australia's State and Federal Governments when there is any mention of the detrimental impacts to agricultural land and underground aquifers due to methane gas activity.

What is certain is that this is a NATIONAL DISGRACE! Evidence is mounting for the following:

- There are inadequate legislative/regulatory procedures in Queensland to protect farmers from the economic and environmental risks, due to coal seam gas activity. Agriculture values have been overlooked in the whole coal seam debate for farmers who are directly and indirectly affected.
- No risk assessment has been carried out for the impacts of the Surat Gas Project. The industry needs to provide actual evidence of the ways in which they determine there is 'none or minor impact' on agricultural values.

Property Rights Australia (PRA) is supporting farmers on the Western Downs in their call for the State and Federal Government to resurrect the interim recommendations of the Senate Committee's Unconventional Gas Inquiry (Bender Inquiry) with a view to halting all activity and ensuring all players in the Coal Seam Gas Industry are held accountable.

It is blatantly obvious that the serious problems exposed five years ago are still present in the industry and are going unchecked. Nothing has changed and appalling deficiencies have been identified whereby farmers' future livelihoods and farms are under threat.

Is it really possible that both the State and Federal Governments would sell their Darling Downs farmers out for the short-term gain of royalties? The Qld State Govt came to power in 2015 partly on promises of an open and transparent government. This is yet to be seen.

Ends



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