



That the Synod:

Request the Moderator to write to the Queensland State Premier requesting that comprehensive baseline studies be conducted prior to the commencement of any new mining development or expansion of existing mining operations.

Inclusion of comprehensive baseline testing in mining approval processes

The scope of a Proposal

Request the Moderator to write to the Queensland State Premier requesting that comprehensive baseline studies be conducted prior to the commencement of any new mining development (including coal, oil and gas mining) or expansion of existing mining operations. These studies should be conducted over a minimum 13 month period and include but not be limited to establishing baselines for:

- environmental conditions, including air, soil and water quality
- the physical and mental health of the neighbouring population
- the social character/capital of neighbouring communities
- infrastructure and economic strength of neighbouring towns and communities.

Studies should be conducted independently and once complete made readily available to the public to track both favourable and unfavourable changes in the surrounding communities, populations and environments as a consequence of mining processes.

Rationale

In order to track change one needs to have a baseline. In view of the significant controversy attached to mining developments to date, it is essential that appropriate baseline studies are put in place before any further mining licences are issued. Gushes of methane are now bubbling from long stretches of the Condamine River. One CSG company has claimed it was always like that but residents living along the river for 60 years have not seen it to this extent in their lifetime. Researchers from Southern Cross University have found levels of Radon and Methane in the Tara gas fields three times higher than in surrounding areas. The gas industry says it is natural.

Similar circumstances are occurring in the health of individuals and families living near mining projects. Reports of adverse health conditions from neighbours of current mining developments are frequent, along with a growing body of international literature supporting their concerns. But proving the source of these changes in health and wellbeing is widely contested.

The social and economic benefits to mining regions are also widely contested. Proponents of mining projects regularly “talk up” the benefits of their proposals, it can be hard to assess the true benefit of these projects. Recent experiences in the CSG industry have seen “boom” followed by “bust”, often tearing at the social and economic fabric of surrounding townships. Whilst the economic advantage might be evident in the initial years of a project, the long term cost-benefit for the economy and the community must also be considered.

Appropriate baselines from which individuals, communities, corporations and governments can accurately and effectively track changes will settle the science and leave no room for doubt or excuses. It is essential that the science be in place before any further mining developments are permitted.

Baseline monitoring should not be an ad hoc, one-off event. It is important that it is comprehensively measured over a long period thus measuring the fluctuations of the seasons and other events. With the extremes of our climate it is essential that baseline testing of air, soil, water and noise covers the resultant seasonal variations. In any given year there may be times of extremely high rainfall, and long periods with no rainfall, there may be hot dry conditions, hot humid conditions and cold periods. A river may be fast flowing, or not flowing. Dams and domestic rainwater tanks may be almost stagnant or diluted. Soil may be saturated or deeply cracking. Air may be still or wind may blow from the coast or inland depending upon the season. In order to obtain an accurate baseline environmental assessment appropriate measurements should be taken throughout all four seasons. At a minimum that would mean 13 months to ensure at least some overlap of repeatable data.

Proposers

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. Slaughter", is written over a horizontal blue line.

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