

Media release

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CSG regulation should be federal issue

The federal government should do more to protect agricultural land from coal seam gas mining, according to a new report commissioned by The Australia Institute.

The research, released today, was undertaken by the Australian Network of Environmental Defender's Offices.

It identifies areas of the Constitution of Australia which would allow for national reforms to protect Australia's communities, food security, health, water, climate and biodiversity.

The report recommends that the Commonwealth drafts new legislation making it an offence for a corporation to use food producing land for unconventional gas development, without written consent from the land's owners.

"This recommendation makes it clear that federal governments can and should take responsibility for CSG developments and not hand control to the states," Executive Director of The Australia Institute, Dr Richard Denniss said.

"The Coalition plans to pass responsibility for these regulations to the states. Allowing the states to make these decisions without robust reform at a federal level could be disastrous for our communities, the environment and the economy."

The report also recommends the cancellation of bilateral agreements with the states to ensure the Commonwealth retains an approval role for unconventional gas developments.

"The federal government has been passing the buck on mining and coal seam gas regulation to states, but the reality is we can reform the industry at a Commonwealth level," Dr Denniss said.

Another recommendation is that the National Food Plan be strengthened by introducing mandatory exclusion zones around prime agricultural land used for food production.

"This is something farmers have been crying out for for years. It's time the federal government stepped up and took responsibility for protecting our crucial industries from gas development that we don't want or need," Dr Denniss said.

Note to editor:

A copy of the report is available for free download at www.tai.org.au.

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