

Yes, it's toxic: coal seam gas water reinjection sparks fears for Northwest

Alarm bells are ringing for a geochemist, local farmers and environmentalists as Santos float their plans to reinject coal seam gas water into aquifers in northwest NSW, fearing reinjection of this water puts aquifers at risk, even if Santos do some treatment first.

At the recent Santos Community Consultative Committee meeting, member Tony Pickard first heard Santos' plans to reinject briny and treated coal seam gas water, with treated water planned for shallow aquifers to be reused under water sharing plans.

Geochemist John Polglase has commented on a coal seam gas water test result of one briny evaporation pond in the Pilliga, a water test commissioned by the Mullaley Gas Pipeline Accord.

"The major element ratios in this water are completely unlike freshwater," said geochemist John Polglase.

"This water cannot be remediated to agricultural or human consumption without intense treatment followed by further element supplementation to produce a more natural balance of elements."

"For instance, the potassium concentration and the sodium concentration are that high and the calcium concentration and magnesium concentration is so low that a process like desalination cannot rectify this major element imbalance," he said.

On aquifer reinjection, Polglase said, "To-date, geophysicists and geochemists have found it impossible to agree on or be certain about the long-term stability and effectiveness of the few burial locations for nuclear waste that they have laboriously located worldwide. Why should the proponents of CSG production water reinjection, perform and fare any better?"

David Quince of the Mullaley Gas Pipeline Accord said, "The expert geochemist's advice and comments on our coal seam gas water results from the Pilliga completely contradict what Santos is saying. This coal seam gas water isn't safe and shouldn't be released out into the environment."

"Even the independent lab scientist doing the water testing commented clearly in their report that, *'In regard to drinking, this water is toxic,'* and, *'This sample of water is unacceptable for any use,'*" he said. (Water test comments attached.)

Naomi Hogan of the Wilderness Society said, "This process could harm our Pilliga aquifers, a risky move in the southern recharge zone of the Great Artesian Basin, and in the iconic Pilliga forest which has been mapped as potentially completely groundwater dependent.

"Toxic water in our environment, spills and wildlife deaths continue to occur as a result of coal seam gas mining in the Pilliga.

"Coal seam gas mining is simply inappropriate for the Pilliga, a recharge area of the Great Artesian Basin and iconic wildlife haven," she said.

For more information

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Attached: Water samples of a coal seam gas evaporation pond in the Pilliga forest, commissioned by Mullaley Gas Pipeline Accord.