

## **Coal-Seam Gas – small group discussion, “faith. on earth” event, the Wetlands Centre 23/9/11**

### **What are the issues?**

- Protecting water resources
- Protecting food security
- Disruption for farmers – land surface, security, access, stress
- Greenhouse gases and climate change
- Wise use of gas resources – how much and for whom?
- Government revenue from royalties
- Employment issues – farming, mining
- Mining company profits
- Lack of transparency regarding technologies used and the risks

### **What are the different views in the debate? What truth does each position bring?**

Farmers:

- Concerned about impacts on food production
- Concerned about threat to their way of life
- Concerned about loss of income from farming but also aware of the potential gain of income from hosting extraction wells
- Concerned about health impacts

Mining companies:

- Want certainty from government
- Need income, profits to remain viable
- See their activities as a contribution to the community

Government:

- Concerned about revenue from royalties, jobs, national prosperity
- Is concerned about what voters will do at the next election

Some public views (and there are many publics):

- Concerned about food security, water quality and availability, public health, risks of contamination to land and water
- Climate change and renewable energy production
- Prosperity and way of life

### **What are the stories/narratives underlying the debate?**

- Progress and prosperity – technological advancement, generation of wealth, improving our way of life
- Posterity – sustaining our way of life and capacity to produce food
- Sustainability – but what is to be sustained? Integrity of ecosystems? Way of life (whose way of life e.g. farmers)? Mining profits? Stable climate?
- Tensions between stories of who/what Australia is – an agricultural nation? A mining nation?

### **What is God calling the church to do in the public sphere on this issue?**

- How to share the benefits of the Earth’s resources for all humankind?
- Do we as Christians see our role to go beyond seeing resources as solely there for human use, to seeing ourselves as being just one part of creation? If we do, what might this look like in the context of coal seam gas extraction?
- There is a need to proceed with caution – short-term profits should not be put ahead of other values such as food production and clean water, there is a need to better understand risks from fracking
- God calls also to support groups whose voices are marginalised in the debates and decision making, such as farmers who do not have the same power as mining companies