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From: Inquiry into Unconventional Gas POV eSubmission Form
<cso@parliament.vic.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 10 July 2015 10:22 AM
To: EPC
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into Unconventional Gas in Victoria.

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Unconventional Gas in Victoria.

Emeritus Professor Malcolm Skilbeck AO
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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into Onshore Unconventional Gas in Victoria

I recognise the importance of new sources of energy and support research and development leading to their use in meeting global as well as national energy requirements. I also understand the need to maintain a high level of export earnings, for the benefit of all Australians. However, I do not believe that the technique of fracking for gas recovery should be among these earnings. The Australian standard of living has received enormous benefits from mineral exports, so why, it will be asked, should coal seam gas and other unconventional forms of gas not be among them? I provide three reasons why fracking as a means of procuring gas should and must not proceed.

First, as is acknowledged, there are environmental risks as yet unknown which should not be added to the manifest threats to the health of the environment resulting from industry, population growth, and sought for increases in human living standards. On the contrary, we should be doing everything possible to reduce known and anticipated risks. Fracking imposes unacceptable risks to agricultural production, water supplies, atmospheric pollution and environmental amenities. Moreover its introduction is a source of conflict and disharmony within the community, of which we already have too much. We should be doing everything possible to improve our wellbeing and harmony in an age of extreme conflict and violence. Internationally I do not believe this factor in human affairs is being given the attention it deserves in the sphere of industrial development.

Second, I believe that state and federal governments, the research community and industry, should be focussing their energies and resources on the systematic search for forms of energy and exports generally which do not have the massive threats to life posed by extracting coal and coal seam gas. I agree with the recent Encyclical by Pope Francis (On the Care of our Common Home) that there is an overwhelmingly important need to substitute for fossil fuels. Australia has failed thus far to meet this requirement and should be doing everything possible to meet it. Fracking will worsen our performance and bring disgrace to those

promoting and engaging in it.

Third, and by no means least, we should be showing greater, not less, respect for the beauty of the earth and the fruits with which it provides us. We have a great deal to make amends for and should be resolutely setting ourselves against further ravages. Destruction such as that of the vitally and globally important Amazon rainforests, the increasing loss of animal and plant species (including land of fundamental importance to the future viability of food crops) and the increasingly violent and damaging weather patterns are warnings that we are destroying at an accelerating rate the earth, the conditions upon which not only our wellbeing but our very survival as a species depends. Australia should not be adding any forces whatsoever to the rape of the earth when it could be leading an intelligent, thoughtful restoration of nature. In this context, fracking is a greedy, disrespectful, totally unnecessary violation of earth's beauty – that is its quality as a life source – in quest of shallow, short term benefits. It would be an unforgiveable crime against life itself for either public bodies or private interests to be given permission for fracking. We do not wish our country to be seen raising the banner of stupidity, insensitivity and narrow self interest when there is an alternative banner of intelligence, care and justice (for all) waiting to be unfurled.

Consequently we think that the current inquiry should seek to extend the boundaries of its reference to include the wider context of alternative forms of energy and export earnings. We look forward to the committee showing leadership, foresight and a constructive approach to the fundamental issues raised by the prolongation and extension of fossil fuel and gas extraction.

I request that these considerations be given full and close consideration by members of the inquiry and its staff.

Yours sincerely,

Emeritus Professor Malcolm Skilbeck AO

July 8, 2015.

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File2:

File3: