

The Secretary, Environment and Planning Committee,
Parliament House,
Spring Street,
Melbourne, Vic 3002

Submission for State Inquiry into Unconventional Gas (UCG)

I am a resident of the rural community of Bengworden in the Shire of East Gippsland. My property is subject to an exploration licence for unconventional on-shore gas mining along with all my neighbours – a situation of great concern to the overwhelming majority of residents in our farming community.

In November 2014 a district-wide survey was conducted where over 450 local residents were asked if they were in favour of an unconventional gas mining industry being established on our properties.

More than 98% of respondents said NO!

So it is clear that there is no social licence for this industry to commence operations here and, again I make the point, that I do not support any form of unconventional gas mining being conducted in our district for the following reasons.

Firstly, the known risks to our groundwater reserves created by the fracking method and the dangerous chemicals used in the gas extraction process are completely unacceptable. Every farm in the district relies on this underground aquifer for stock water, some for irrigation and many for domestic supplies. Without it continuing to be available in its present uncontaminated condition and adequate quantity, virtually all agricultural production across the district would be placed in jeopardy, not to mention the effect on numerous households also reliant on the groundwater. How could any government give this industry the go ahead when there is ample evidence from Queensland and NSW, as well as from overseas, of contamination and damage to fragile and complex underground water systems as in the case of the aquifer we are totally reliant on?

Secondly, in a closely settled district like ours the infrastructure required for gas wells to be sunk and brought into production would render the day to day operations of a farm problematic and extremely difficult. Farmers would have their paddocks criss-crossed by all weather gravel roads for 24 hour use by contractors, mine operators and gas delivery pipelines. Numerous well pad sites, compressor stations and evaporation ponds for storing toxic waste material – a bi-product of this industry – would be constructed. Dust, light and noise pollution 24 hours a day, seven days a week would all add up to a constant threat to local people's physical and psychological health. Falling land values won't help property owners' sense of well-being either.

Why should multi-national mining companies and their shareholders 'right to make a profit' overrule the rights of ordinary Australian citizens?

The long term protection of the environment, especially our precious water reserves, should outweigh short term profits for corporations who plunder, move on and then leave the pieces to be picked up by others.

I urge you to ban any form of unconventional gas mining in Victoria.