

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 1 July 2015 10:22 AM  
**To:** EPC  
**Subject:** Submission to the Environment & Planning Committee Inquiry into Unconventional Gas in Victoria

To the Environment and Planning Committee,

My name is Victoria Smith. I am a final year medical student who lives in the beautiful outer eastern region of Melbourne, in the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges.

I am writing to you because at the end of this year I will graduate as a doctor, and I firmly believe that doctors have an ethical and professional obligation to advocate for the health of their patients. I am a member of Doctors for the Environment Australia, and along with many members of the health community, I hold grave concerns regarding the health effects of Coal Seam Gas.

Coal Seam Gas is rapidly expanding in Australia, and is edging closer to urban areas and prime agricultural regions. However we have little evidence to suggest that the benefits of CSG mitigate the risks that it poses to human health, agriculture and the environment. The health of the Victorian people relies on the maintenance of a healthy environment, secure food production, having access to fresh foods and clean drinking water and supporting our community. What is most concerning about coal seam gas is that there is grossly insufficient information on the nature and doses of chemicals used in 'fracking' and we know little about how much is entering our water and air, and their effect on human health. There are concerns that some of the long-term effects of chemicals used in CSG mining include hormonal system disruption, fertility and reproductive effects and the development of cancers. There are no published scientific studies demonstrating the safety of these substances or published health impact risk assessments.

CSG threatens to contaminate our groundwater systems, which would have disastrous consequences for food production, agriculture and the health of the community. Despite being promoted as a 'cleaner' alternative to coal, CSG mining is not renewable and is still polluting. It is a short-lived industry that will last 25-30 years only. It uses vast volumes of water which in a water scarce country like ours, is simply not sustainable. It doesn't assist us to transition to renewable energies - that transition can be made without the need for CSG as a 'bridging' fuel. It would be a poor investment when we already have clean technologies like solar and wind at our disposal, that pose no threats whatsoever to human health or our agricultural industry.

We don't need an unconventional gas industry in Victoria to provide employment. Supporting and growing our renewables industry will provide more jobs that are future-proofed and lead to greater long-term employment growth in Victoria. Growth in our renewables industry provides a valuable opportunity for re-skilling and redeploying workers who need help to transition from traditional energy production roles – there are now more people employed installing solar panels in Victoria than in coal generation.

In other states of Australia such as Queensland and New South Wales, there has been an outpouring of community concern and protest against Coal Seam Gas. This has spanned the entire community and there are representatives opposing CSG from across the political spectrum. I believe this highlights the community's concern about the considerable risks CSG poses for the health of our people and the environment. If our land is ruined, so is our food production, our water, and our communities will slowly disintegrate.

Victorian communities don't want unconventional gas. At least 30 communities have already declared themselves gasfield-free, and the number continues to grow. The Government needs to respect the wishes of Victorian communities.

**Victoria Smith**  
Medical student

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