

## SUBMISSION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

### INQUIRY INTO UNCONVENTIONAL GAS IN VICTORIA

From: Melinda Venticich and Simon Ransome

[REDACTED]

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this Inquiry. We do not wish to give evidence to the Committee.

I am very concerned at the prospect of fracking and other unconventional gas production (UGP) becoming established in Victoria, and elsewhere in Australia. I consider Victoria should enact a permanent ban on all unconventional gas exploration and production.

The following points respond to specific clauses in the Inquiry's terms of reference.

In relation to clause (2), my view is that the environmental, land productivity and public health risks of onshore unconventional gas activities far outweigh the potential benefits.

The risks of UGP to farming land and our water resources cannot be safely managed. The potential impacts are immense: large numbers of boreholes, pipelines and associated infrastructure; the use of benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylenes and other industrial chemicals to facilitate gas extraction; leaked emissions; and the large volumes of 'produced water' containing salts and other dangerous solutes would inevitably damage the health of local communities, and adversely affect land used for valuable agricultural production, and water resources used for human and animal consumption.

We saw from the Hazelwood mine fire that regulatory systems can fail, and that failure can lead to highly damaging environmental and public health outcomes. The risks are too great.

In relation to clause (3), UGP threatens food quality for domestic consumption, and our recognised 'clean and green' status in relation to export markets. I am concerned that the rights of property owners to refuse UGP exploration can be over-ridden, and for resultant reduction in property values. The landscape impacts of UGP infrastructure is likely to reduce tourism. A permanent ban on UGP would protect existing Victorian jobs, especially in agriculture and tourism.

In relation to clause (4), there is no gas shortage in Victoria or anywhere else in Australia, according to the Australian Energy Market Operator, so there is no need to risk the health of crucial farmland just to extract gas that we don't need.

On the contrary, Victoria needs to redirect all relevant policies towards zero net emissions. UGP has no place in Victoria's future energy sources. The government cannot allow a new gas industry to be established if Victoria is to be considered a leader on climate change, and the Committee should recommend accordingly.

(4) A Victorian gas industry will not save consumers money. Victorian gas production from unconventional sources will **not** reduce the prices that consumers have to pay. Gas prices have increased because LNG exports have linked Australia to international markets where prices are higher. The best solution for consumers to reduce gas bills is through energy efficiency initiatives.

**Do not entrench a fracking and coal seam gas industry in Victoria.**