

Dear Committee looking into Unconventional Gas Enquiry,

I live in SW Victoria at Deans Marsh. My wife and I are primary producers. We grow farm trees for rural properties all over the Otways and Western District.

I am concerned, and totally against unconventional gas mining in any form in our state.

There appears to be too many unanswered questions about the threat to our underground aquifers from this industry. The fracking of the substrata could cause leakages of the UCG chemicals into our aquifers. To me, this is a risk we do not need to take. The driest inhabited continent needs every drop of available water for human, agricultural, and environmental needs.

I am living in a community that has overwhelmingly decided that UCG is not part of our future community plan. Over 95% of the Deans Marsh district signed the Lock the Gate survey saying no to this industry operating here. I have been part of this community for over 30 years. Locally, there are other industries (agriculture and tourism) and social and environmental enterprises (Landcare, Agfoforestry) that have been operating here for years. These add up to a vibrant, socially strong, economically viable district. UCG does not fit in to our community.

*Terms of Reference:*

1. *the prospectivity of Victoria's geology for commercial sources of onshore unconventional gas.*

Again, ground water is too precious in this dry country to be wasted on this industry. Not only the risk of contaminating our groundwater but all the water that is needed to get the gas out of the ground is unsustainable.

2. *the environmental, land productivity and public health risks, risk mitigations and residual risks of onshore unconventional gas activities;*

Too many questions are still unanswered about the risk to the groundwater aquifer. I'm not a geologist but as a primary producer who has struggled to keep our business going during the millennium drought, I know how important clean, fresh, uncontaminated water is. And every drop counts. So what will a UCG company do when all of a sudden, it is discovered that the aquifer in their drilling zone is contaminated with the chemicals they use in the fracking process. What CAN they do? Nothing. It's under the ground, the water moves from here to there. The horse has bolted.

The aquifer is not unlimited. In our region Barwon Water already pumps the MAXIMUM allowed amount of water out of the aquifer. Boundary Creek doesn't

flow any more. How many more creeks will dry up if this extremely thirsty industry starts to drill?

3. the coexistence of onshore unconventional gas activities with existing land and water uses, including-

(a) agricultural production and domestic and export market requirements;

Victoria, especially in the west of the state, is the breadbasket of Australia. Victorian agriculture has a good reputation for producing high quality food/feed products, especially to our overseas markets. Tasmanian farmers will be rubbing their hands with glee if we start UCG mining in Victoria. They use their “sustainable farm products” advertising with relish and you can bet they will start a campaign about being the “only place in Australia” where they aren’t fracking, etc etc. I can’t see these two industries working side by side. I can see agriculture working side by side with wind turbines and solar farms.

(b) the legal rights of property owners and the impact on property values;

I cannot for the life of me, even try to understand, after all the work, money, and sweat that rural landowners have put into their properties, that a private company has the RIGHT to invade your property and basically destroy the property owner’s livelihoods. Victorian farms are small by comparison to Queensland and NSW. There will be massive disruption to access to properties as well as loss of property values for that property and surrounding properties.

(c. any implications for local and regional development, investment and jobs;

I believe UCG will not encourage jobs within the region. Because of the size of the investment by mining companies, they will need lots of wells in an area, displacing residents and businesses (and subsequently, jobs) in the area and discouraging investment by traditional rural industries in the region.

4. the ability of potential onshore unconventional gas resources contributing to the State’s overall energy sources including —

(a) an ability to provide a competitive source of energy and non energy inputs for Victorian industries;

Fossil fuels regardless of their source are dirty, polluting sources. They are technologies from a bygone era. Do not waste money on this energy source when alternative sources are gearing up for a very sunny and windy future.

(b) an affordable energy source for domestic consumers; and

Alternative energy sources such as wind and solar, I believe, is where the future lies, not in carbon based fuels. Renewables provide real long term benefits for the environment and for jobs.

Why not put our tax payer monies to work on reducing our need for fossil fuels- encourage electric cars in this country, retrofitting houses and businesses for energy efficiency.

5. the resource knowledge requirements and policy and regulatory safeguards that would be necessary to enable exploration and development of onshore unconventional gas resources, including —

It seems like every day we hear stories from the USA and elsewhere about UCG coming out of kitchen taps and bubbling out of the ground. We hear of leaks or overflows in used fracking water settling ponds. I believe we still haven't the knowledge of whether UCG is safe for the long term future of our ground water supply.

I believe you should be having an enquiry into why our governments aren't moving heaven and earth to have as many renewable energy farms out their in this sunny and windy beautiful country of ours.

Regards,

Mike Robinson-Koss