

Submission - Unconventional Gas Mining Inquiry

My name is Susan Holberton and I have lived in metropolitan Melbourne for most of my life. I have reached retirement age and have children and a grandchild. One of my daughters lives in country South Australia and when visiting her I have seen the many yellow LOCK THE GATE triangles on farmers' gates and in local stores. Their campaign and my concern about the environment for future generations have prompted me to write this submission.

I do not support any form of unconventional gas mining, including coal seam gas, tight gas, shale gas and underground coal gasification.

Terms of Reference

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

Given that 40% of South Australia's energy is currently being sourced from renewables, it is pointless to undertake projects to increase the use of fossil fuels in Victoria.

(2) *The environmental, land productivity and public health risks, risk mitigations and residual risks of onshore unconventional gas activities*

(3) *the coexistence of onshore unconventional gas activities with existing land and water uses*

The risks outweigh the gain in financial terms for Victoria. We should be looking to long term solutions and be protecting our aquifers at all costs. As the world's driest continent, Australia must put water first on any agenda. I visited a sheep farm in Western Victoria in March and they had not received viable rain since August 2014. I flew over Victorian farms last week on my way north and saw that many dams were low and some empty. I cannot support any project which endangers the quantity and quality of our water supply.

As I said in my introduction, many farmers do not want mining on their land.

Productivity is at risk when they have a gas well planted in the middle of a field. The infrastructure required for gas wells such as access roads, the clearing of paddocks and evaporation dams are a burden on farmers and have an impact on property values and future investment. One farmer I spoke to told me that trees which protected the border of his property had been damaged by a coal seam gas company.

Victorians want clean, safe and locally grown food and unconventional gas mining is at odds with this. It is an encumbrance on farmers who already face the vagaries of climate, unstable markets and restrictions placed on them by the supermarket duopoly. We require investment in the agricultural sector, rather than in an industry which has already shown to have deleterious effects on water and farmlands in the U.S.A.

(4) *The ability of potential onshore unconventional gas resources contributing to the State's overall energy sources*

As unconventional gases need to be fracked to release the gas from the coal seam or rock, the energy cost of the gas is high compared with conventional LNG. However, I would argue that future energy security will not come from fossil fuels. A forward planning government would be supporting research and investment into ways we can reduce our need for gas and increase the use of renewable energy. Economies like China have no choice but to do this as their skies are choked with the emissions from fossil fuels. Victoria has a choice and I urge the government to encourage and support investment in renewable energy such as solar and wind, rather than throwing money into scientific work to inform and justify the regulation and monitoring of the unconventional gas industry.