

Rebecca Reid

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To the Standing Committee on the Environment and Planning,

My family and I are strongly opposed to unconventional gas mining including hydraulic fracturing, coal seam gas, tight gas, shale gas and underground coal gasification.

I live on an almost 800 acre wool farm in East Gippsland. My husband and I have two children and I work at the local high school as a laboratory technician. We live on the property with my husband's parents and his sister's family. Their family have been farmers for generations. I did not grow up in the district, but my Mother's family were also sheep farmers. I have grown to love the area and call it home. Both my husband and I have further education in science.

My husband and his parents run the property, and are proud of the beautiful superfine sheep they have bred. My husband and his father have planted thousands of trees over the years and they are starting to implement rotational grazing and other methods to improve the soil and pastures particularly increasing the amount of carbon the soil will hold. It is a beautiful property and has a lot of potential. Our property is right on the Gippsland Lakes, home to roughly 300 species of native fauna and 400 species of flora. The wetlands of our lakes have been declared as Ramsar Convention sites of international importance. It is a delicate ecosystem but is a huge drawcard for tourism and is enjoyed by many locals for recreation and fishing. It really is the heart and soul of our community.

After doing a lot of reading we have come to the firm conclusion that we are opposed to any form of unconventional gas mining on our property and we cannot see how it can be approved anywhere with a clear conscience.

It would be a huge struggle to attempt to raise sheep with increased traffic and noise. Ewes can be quite skittish and can lose lambs when startled. It would be impossible to work around trucks, new roads, potentially polluted settling ponds, and noisy drills. Not only because of the pasture we would lose, but because of how disjointed our farm would become. We rely on ground water for our stock which is also incompatible with gas extraction. Unconventional gas mining uses a huge amount of water, depleting the water table so that there is less water available. Then there are horror stories of ground water being polluted by the toxic chemicals used during these processes and sometimes released from the ground itself.

Settling ponds for toxic waste water are also used by these industries which are also incompatible with farming. Although primarily our sheep are bred for their wool, part of our income is through the sale of mutton. How can a farmer guarantee that their product is safe for consumption when their land has been taken over to process toxic waste? Another problem we can see with settling ponds and harmful chemicals is the potential for the pollution of our precious lakes.

Sadly we have come to learn that Gas mining companies cannot be trusted. In Pennsylvania the Environmental Protection Authority released data that over 253 instances in which drilling

contaminated water wells. Some of the causes of contamination were methane gas contamination, spills of wastewater and other pollutants, and wells that went dry or were otherwise undrinkable. In our own country stories are emerging from Queensland where land has been polluted and the consequences on human health are alarming. Once polluted, the damage cannot be reversed.

Another interesting fact to consider is that in our region East Gippsland Water are using underground aquifers to store water in a process known as ASR (Aquifer Storage and Recovery) it would seem logical that potentially polluting these aquifers could have a huge impact on future water supplies for the region.

There is also the issue of fugitive gas emissions, combining with the labour intensiveness of gas extraction to make it a filthy industry contributing huge amounts of greenhouse gasses. Gas producers claim that it is all for cheaper pricing, but as we will be competing on a global market we will be paying global prices.

With over seven billion people in the world and the population rising dramatically it is going to be the challenge of our age to provide everyone with clean food and drinking water. We need to protect our agricultural land for future food security, not waste it and ruin it for short term gain. I think not only of my own children but for the Australians of the future. What kind of legacy do we wish to leave?

The legacy I would like to leave is one where our land is respected and cared for.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Rebecca N. R. Reid,

