

STATEMENT AND SUBMISSION FROM THE CONDAH GROUNDWATER USERS COMMITTEE

The members of the Condah Groundwater Users Committee have passed a motion supporting a permanent ban on any form of unconventional gas mining in the region of the Port Campbell Limestone and indeed, Victoria.

Evidence in many areas where unconventional gas mining has taken place, both overseas and in Australia, indicates the risk of failure in this industry to be very apparent and has indeed incurred disastrous consequences to both environment and human and livestock health.

Our committee considers that even the smallest chance of risk to our groundwater, environment (and therefore food production ability), community health, livestock health, tourism and native animal health is incomprehensible. The fact that any contamination inflicted by onshore gas mining to our environment is irreversible and forever and thus renders the risk that this industry poses, however small, to be utterly untenable.

The current Government has encouraged Australian farmers to increase food production to 2030 through better use of groundwater among other efficiencies. Our committee cannot even contemplate how this initiative can be undertaken whilst allowing unconventional gas mining in areas where we have the most valuable and dynamic food production. Our clean, green image as food producers would indeed be lost forever- and with good reason- if the world saw Australia's government encouraging gas fracking (whether for tight, shale or coal seam gas extraction) alongside farming.

Indeed the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's report indicates in its overview of impact assessment concerning the Otway region, that there is a risk of potential impacts on natural resources, in particular, groundwater. Surely the argument should stop there.

Once the mining companies have extracted all the gas from a particular site and have moved on without effecting any or sufficient reparation, it is our understanding through information released by The Meat and Livestock Australia, that addressing environmental damage originating from onshore gas extraction, would become the responsibility of the landholder should the EPA require rehabilitation. Government laws do not currently protect the environment or landholders in this instance. Farmers could never shoulder the expense of this unfair burden even if there was a possibility of repair.

Farming is sustainable and unconventional gas mining is not. No responsible government would ever allow this industry to encroach upon our region.

Our committee and farming members of our surrounding community believe that the onshore gas mining industry should never have been a consideration in our region. We are extremely disgruntled knowing that the unpaid time we have been forced to apply to fighting the threat of this industry should instead have been directed to our daily work.

Our committee has voted unanimously to a total and permanent ban to unconventional gas mining in Victoria.