

Jenny Jeal

23/9/2015

The Parliamentary Inquiry into
Onshore Unconventional Gas

My name is Jenny Jeal and I am currently residing in Hamilton, but, born in Coleraine, have lived in Henty, Portland and most recently, Condah.

I attended a rally in Melbourne on Sunday and there, was approached by a man who advised that he used to be a resident of Tara, QLD. He spoke of how, when the gas workers arrived, the tourists left because the price of accommodation skyrocketed and besides, who wants to visit an industrial site. People who could not afford the higher residential costs were forced out. When the gas field was completed and the miners and associated imported labor upped and left, they left behind businesses in debt. The big miners got their money, the contractors they brought with them got theirs, the locals who tried to work with them were left out in the cold.

Whether they were bad money managers, could not recoup enough to cover the cost of enlarging their businesses or were “screwed” by the mining fraternity, I don’t know.

Accommodation is now being offered for free, just to try to get people to come back. He said that the town was struggling to exist. I suppose the lessors, pubs and motels thought it was a pretty good thing at the time, but now they have no income. He said that Tara had been socially and economically destroyed. Although very controlled, his emotional pain showed in his words and face.

My family has lived and farmed in this region for about 170 years. Members of my family still farm the land here. I love this area and hate the thought of the same thing happening here as has happened to Tara and the surrounding communities.

The communities that are standing up today and saying no to Unconventional Gas Mining have been in existence 100 – 150 years, some more. Each community has its unique character, built over time. Change always happens, that’s part of life. Most recently communities lost many long standing and historical members when the bluegum industry was given government approval and money. Some of those communities are still feeling the effects today. But some of these communities will not survive the sort of stresses that will be brought to bear should UGM be permitted to rip through them.

The government has demanded that farmers become more productive, in order to feed Asia, yet are prepared to risk the cleanness of this land and water and the health of the communities that serve them.

The Reith Report suggested that Royalties be channelled back into these communities. With governments so strapped for cash, anyone who believes that will happen is naive. If, by some

chance, it did, those royalties would not be enough to help these communities find their way with the loss of so many members and the dramatic and sudden changes that will happen. The cost in the loss of income, health (both physical and mental), tourism, environment, including the possibility of contamination would more than eat up any monetary compensation from royalties. Some local individuals may do well out of UGM in this region, but this mining is very short term. 10 to 15 years and they are gone.

After that there would be nothing to replace it, especially if they contaminate the land and water. Is such a short term gain worth the long term effect on these unique communities and this beautiful, productive region?

Is the government really prepared to destroy this region, these towns, communities, their economy and social structure and future productiveness for this kind of activity?

I hope you will say an emphatic no.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Jeal