

From: Don stokes [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 4 July 2015 4:30 PM
To: EPC
Subject: Submission to the Parliamentary inquiry into unconventional gas

To the Environment and Planning Committee,

I am an Australian citizen who, after reading reports on unconventional gas extraction, and listening to people who have been affected by it, am alarmed that, even after the damage done to water tables and agricultural land in QLD and in the US, Australian governments may be considering proposals from the industry to allow this process to go ahead.

I live in Heidelberg, Victoria, and work in the wine industry. The overwhelming majority of our customers from Victoria to the Hunter Valley are concerned at the potential damage to the water table, and therefore to the industry by unconventional gas extraction.

My submission is that:

The process of extraction of coal seam gas, shale gas and tight gas is proven to be damaging to the water table due to fracturing of the rock strata separating water tables, and/or polluting of water tables due to the injection of toxic chemicals used in the process, or by the contamination of artesian water by gas released into it through the fracturing of rock. This has been the result in NSW, and in parts of the US where unconventional gas extraction has occurred.

Onshore unconventional gas is not a renewable source of energy. After the wells are empty, we will be left with the problem of still needing an energy source, and with the legacy of destroyed farmland, and communities. The use of gas will delay the development of the renewable energy industry, delaying its expansion and costing many jobs, and income for the communities involved.

Renewable energy technologies, such as wind, solar thermal and rooftop PV are proven. Beyond Zero Emissions has documented how Australia can transition to 100% renewable energy (1). Peter Seligman has done similar research independently and come up with a similar outcome (2).

Fossil fuel combustion is a proven source of greenhouse gas, which is causing climate change. Climate change is already disrupting food production, climate stability and displacing populations due to water shortage, drought, fire, floods, cyclones and sea level rise. The scientific consensus is that a temperature rise of 2 degrees C, which carries huge risks to the planet, is now inevitable, even if we stopped polluting tomorrow.

Onshore unconventional gas is too expensive, and if the industry was to bear the true costs of pollution, health and environmental damage, including to the atmosphere, instead of landholders and affected communities, it would not be viable. Its survival depends on the taxpayer picking up the massive hidden and indirect costs.

The wine industry, like all agriculture, is dependant on clean water and a healthy environment, as is the tourist industry. A permanent ban would provide certainty to these businesses and promote long term employment and economic stability.

Onshore unconventional gas does not employ as many people as the renewable energy industry, and the surrounding communities bear the costs of gas, whereas communities surrounding renewable energy projects benefit from more jobs and royalties from wind turbines without the costs of pollution, environmental damage or fuel. Eg; there are now more people employed installing solar panels in Victoria than in coal generation.

The coal industry is undemocratic. Victorian communities don't want unconventional gas. At least 30 communities have already declared themselves gasfield-free, and the number continues to grow. The Government needs to respect the wishes of Victorian communities. Other jurisdictions like New York City and Ohio have already instituted permanent bans on coal seam gas, and Victoria should follow suit, as this is what the community wants.

Thankyou for considering my submission.

Yours Sincerely,

Don Stokes



(1) http://media.bze.org.au/ZCA2020_Stationary_Energy_Report_v1.pdf

(2) http://www.energy.unimelb.edu.au/files/site1/docs/pubs/Australian_Sustainable_Energy-by_the_numbers3.pdf