



July 2, 2015

Keir Delaney  
Secretary  
Environment & Planning Committee  
Inquiry into Unconventional Gas in Victoria  
Parliament of Victoria  
Spring Street  
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Submission Against all Forms of Unconventional Gas Mining in Victoria

Dear Mr Delaney and Committee Members,

I would like to submit my objection to all forms of Unconventional Gas Mining (fracking) in Victoria, and request that the Environment and Planning Committee reject this form of mining both now and in the future. Unconventional Gas Mining involves pumping huge amounts of water, sand and a variety of chemicals underground at massive pressure to fracture the earth and allow the gas to escape. Many of the chemicals used are known carcinogens and have the potential to pose health risks to those living in close proximity to the escaping gas. These health risks relate to both humans and livestock.

PEP163

I am aware of permit PEP163 that is currently under a moratorium agreement until October this year close to my home in the Geelong region and find it astounding that this permit has even been granted, without, as I am aware any consultation with the community, who are after all the ones who will be most effected. The permit which includes both suburban and farming properties in and around Geelong, if acted on, has the potential to spell an end to our land and environment as we know it. Please refer to the link below for information from the Australian Institute's research in reference to the gas industry's misleading promotion of the economic benefits of Coal Seam Gas mining while at the same time remaining almost completely silent on the health and environmental risks which are of great concern to residents in potential Unconventional Gas Mining zones. <http://www.tai.org.au/content/fracking-future>

Abuse of Land Ownership Rights

Felicity Millner from the Environment Defender Office, spoke at the Unconventional Gas: Social & Environmental Impacts Event in March 2014. She stated that, although a land owner may refuse a gas mining company access to their land, this can simply be overturned by VCAT upon a submission by the mining company. This is of great concern to me that as land owners, who believe we own and can protect our land from threat, we do not in fact have any rights to our land according to Ms Millner.

### Water Waste & Contamination

Wastewater poses a risk to the environment and health through leaks and spills. These happen with frightening regularity – they do not just pose a threat to people’s health and the environment but also present a serious risk to farmland and livestock.

Coal Seam Gas (CSG) extraction has the potential to cause harm to the environment, farming land, water resources and human health. Recent survey respondents raised all these concerns and the available evidence suggests they have a good basis to be worried. The lack of research undertaken to date into the environmental and health impacts of CSG is alarming. If the gas industry is keen to expand and the government wants it to, then it should commit far more funding to quality research in this area. (Australian Institute, Matt Grudnoff, March 2014).

Cumulative impacts on water quality at a landscape scale are not well understood. Even when individual discharges meet relevant guidelines the cumulative impact associated with increasing load contributions such as salts, nutrients or heavy metals may have significant downstream impacts. There are significant knowledge gaps in the understanding of how cumulative water quality impacts develop in river systems, whether systems are able to assimilate multiple impacts and what critical thresholds apply for capping cumulative loads. (Independent Expert Scientific Committee, 2014)..

As we are all aware, Australia is often affected by drought and therefore we depend on our water supplies as critical to our survival. Given that the Unconventional Gas Mining process requires the use of huge volumes of water to frack each well, there is no justification for the wastage of our valuable water resources in this way. While waste water is a major concern, the amount of water needed for this industry is alarming. We all know too well that this continent is dry and prone to drought. Where will the gas industry obtain this water? When groundwater is extracted from an aquifer there are potential impacts on other water resources, depending on the duration and rate of extraction, and the connectivity (or degree of connection) between the water resources.

In addition to this, the risk of contamination of our underground aquifers also poses a dangerous threat to our water supplies. There is currently no scientific evidence to indicate that Unconventional Gas Mining can be carried out safely without compromising our resources. To date Santos has twice been fined for contamination of water supplies (2011 and 18 February 2014). I include the following link explaining the process of fracking for your further information.

<http://www.dangersoffracking.com/>

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I find it astounding that the Victorian State Government is relying on the public to direct and inform them on the dangers of all forms of Unconventional Gas Mining. I am utterly appalled that there is even an inquiry, as there is nothing positive for any Australian as far as my research indicates which would suggest even considering Unconventional Gas Mining in our state or country. In regards to permit PEP163 referred to above, in the Geelong region the Councillors of the City of Greater Geelong voted unanimously in late 2014 to reject Unconventional Gas Mining in Geelong, indicating the value they place on our region and their opposition to such a destructive process. I can also report that a number of communities in the Geelong area have been surveyed and declare that gas companies have no social licence. The community does not want this industry.

To further assist you in making your decision against CSG Mining in Victoria I would encourage you to read the following report which documents an investigation during February and March 2013 by a concerned General Practitioner, in relation to health complaints by people living in close proximity to coal seam gas development in South West Queensland. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=297AvW905D4>

The gas industry has no concern for the communities, they do not conduct proper community engagement, nor care about the communities they leave behind once operations cease.

I am a mother with a young family, and from the research I have undertaken on fracking and it's effects in areas of Australia and overseas, I cannot see one thing that would be positive for my family, our environment, our health or my children's future.

I trust that you likewise have done your research and come to the same logical conclusion and will make recommendation to the State Government of Victoria to reject all forms of Unconventional Gas Mining.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Nicole Bignoux