

The Environment and Planning Committee,
Parliament House,
Spring St,
Melbourne, 3002

Unconventional Gas Mining Parliamentary Inquiry Submission

Dear Committee Members,

My family operates a sheep farm in a district which is currently subject to an Ignite Energy exploration licence. I am very concerned about the effect an unconventional gas industry would have on the livelihood, health and prosperity of all our district residents. The results of a survey conducted throughout the Perry Bridge, Meerlieu, Bengworden and Goon Nure districts last year proved conclusively that such an industry is not wanted here with more than 98% of residents saying NO to UCG.

I wish to address a number of the Terms of Reference of your Inquiry

1. The prospectivity of Victoria's geology for commercial sources of onshore unconventional gas

Unconventional gas extraction would put at risk the water held in the extensive groundwater aquifers upon which all district residents rely for stock, domestic and in a number of cases, irrigation water. Should this water be contaminated, it would almost certainly be the end of the productive farming businesses presently in operation. Contamination of the soil by the toxic chemicals and waste water used in the fracking process and stored in above-ground settling ponds is also a huge threat. The health of the farming family, as well as the livestock, would be severely compromised.

2. The environmental and residual risks of onshore unconventional gas activities

Our districts form part of the catchment to Australia's largest inland lakes system - the RAMSAR listed Gippsland Lakes and wetlands. Many farmers, with the assistance of Landcare programs over the last 20 years, have spent much time and money improving farming practices to stop nutrient run-off and therefore improve the health of the fragile local waterways and lakes.

Floods have been a fairly regular occurrence of recent times. Imagine the environmental damage to this unique system in the event of a flood! Contaminated and toxic water in settling ponds as well as the exposed soil, due to the mining operation, could all be flushed in to the lakes system. Is all this Landcare work, a legacy of the late Joan Kirner, a complete waste of time on all counts when multi-national mining companies can have a free hand to potentially 'vandalise' the attractive countryside, pollute the aquifers, waterways and lakes and contaminate fertile farmland? All because these company directors think they have a right to make a profit. No matter the lasting destructive consequences!

This Unconventional Gas Industry has had a long time to prove its practices are safe and yet there is evidence from countries such as the USA as well as here in Australia, that they have been unable to do so.

According to Dr Marion Carey, Senior Research Fellow at Monash University in Environmental Sustainability and former Senior Medical Advisor in Environmental Health to the Victorian Chief Health Officer, 'A number of Australian health experts, including one of our Nobel Laureates, are sounding alarm bells. Some US public health experts say that claims of safety lack credibility in the face of a growing litany of accidents and contamination problems. In the words of one analyst: "in the rush to supply CSG to China, Australia could forfeit its water security, and consequently its food security....It seems clear that every Australian has good reason to be concerned about whether Australian CSG mining will impair the Australian way of life."

Please ban this industry in Victoria.