

To the Parliamentary Inquiry into Unconventional Gas Mining in Victoria:

My name is Melissa Corbett, and I live in Melbourne [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] One of the many important reasons that I am opposed to unconventional gas mining is due to the destructive impact that it will have on our environment, especially the release of methane into the atmosphere, which will dramatically increase our risk of experiencing catastrophic climate change.

Unconventional gas drilling produces the product of methane, generally to be burnt in order to provide energy. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas with a global warming potential around 20 times higher than that of carbon dioxide. In order to have any chance of keeping the earth in a habitable temperature range for human survival, we must cease the extraction and consumption of fossil fuels immediately, including but not limited to, all onshore and unconventional gas.

Another devastating environmental impact of unconventional gas mining, is the contamination of ground water for example, I wish to draw the Inquiry's attention to the fine given by the NSW EPA to SANTOS, finding that they had polluted groundwater with uranium and other solids through their onshore gas mining activities.

(<https://newmatilda.com/2015/01/27/hunter-valley-csg-project-halted-after-elevated-chemicals-detected-water>)

In a country as drought-prone as Australia, the contamination of groundwater and aquifers is unacceptable, as this precious resource is needed for use by communities and other industries such as agriculture. Depletion of groundwater through overextraction for use in onshore gas mining activities is also a major concern. Once water has been contaminated through the extraction process, it cannot be safely re-used for any domestic or agricultural purpose. As far as I am aware, the gas industry has not demonstrated in Australia or internationally that they are capable of responsibly managing waste water in the interest of protecting public health and environmental risks relating to water contamination. Current wastewater storage practices, such as using holding ponds is extraordinarily dangerous. In times of rain, the ponds often overflow and run off into the surrounding area.

Possible of contamination of surrounding land that is used for agricultural production, puts at risk the reputation for high quality of Victoria's local agricultural produce. The unacceptable risk to the reputation of agricultural produce that comes from regions where farms have to coexist with farms has resulted in medium term moratoriums on CSG in other states that are heavily reliant on the productivity of the agricultural industry such as Tasmania:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-02-26/fracking-banned-for-five-years-by-tasmanian-government/6265378>

Community opposition to onshore gas mining is highly understandable with anecdotal evidence of health impacts on local residents that are living in areas where hydraulic fracturing is occurring. More than 50 communities around Victoria have conducted comprehensive surveys of landholders and residents and consistently found strong opposition to gas mining, with results as high as 99% of residents opposing the development of a gas industry. Regional communities have been neglected for too long in Australia's political system, and I urge the Parliamentary Inquiry to heed the voices of voters in rural and regional areas in regards to their concerns over their health and the future viability of the land that they, and hence we all rely upon for food production.

Gas extraction is not an industry that is a source of sustainable employment for current and future Victorians. As documented in the Australia Institute report *Fracking the Future*, the gas industry is a relatively small employer, which "According to the ABS, 9,372 additional jobs were created in the oil and gas industry": <http://www.tai.org.au/content/fracking-future>

This is much smaller than established industries such as tourism and agriculture, which the industry is likely to destroy through destruction of the aesthetic beauty of the natural environment of regional Victoria and contamination of prime agricultural land. The loss of these amenities to future Victorian through gas extraction is simply unacceptable and will leave young people such as myself and my children economically poorer as a result of the loss of these important industries.

Gas wells have only a short life span and start failing at 6% in the first year and increase dramatically with each successive year. Abandonment and capping practices are poorly monitored. As with remediation of coal mines such as what occurred with unused section of the mine in Hazelwood, the industry is likely to have no interest in spending additional funds on ensuring legacy safety of these sites. The Halewood mine fire inquiry has been re-opened as a result of community pressure, with safety and health impacts of residents having been so poorly handled by GDF Suez and the previous government. It is clear from this example that once the profitable resource has been extracted, risk mitigation is of no consequence to the extractors and local communities and taxpayers are left to deal with the resulting costs.

Communities such as Morwell are crying out for investment and local employment opportunities, but not if it comes at an unacceptable risk to their health of themselves and their community. We now have the opportunity to take leadership on addressing climate change and renewable energy technologies that are able to provide rural and regional communities with an ongoing source of sustainable drought-proof income. Local farmers can install wind turbines which are a proven safe technology that can coexist with agriculture, as proven in Germany.

I would like to thank the Inquiry for taking the time to read my submission.

Yours,

Melissa Corbett

Melbourne, Victoria