

As a resident of Boolarra (3870) Gippsland I would like to make a submission to the State Government inquiry into onshore unconventional gas extraction in Victoria. I have lived in the area for more than 25 years and do not want to see my home, my family, my community and the surrounding countryside negatively impacted by unconventional gas extraction. I firmly believe they will be if the gas industry is allowed to operate in the area.

Boolarra and the surrounding districts rely very heavily on the agricultural industries of dairy, sheep and cattle farming as well as fruit and vegetable growing. I believe these industries and businesses need to be supported and the land protected as an important food source and income generator for many generations to come. Unconventional gas extraction has the potential to damage these agricultural industries by contaminating the underground aquifers and water supply with toxic chemicals (both those used in the extraction process and those disturbed from their otherwise safe underground storage), by polluting the creeks and rivers with chemicals and the brine solution and by lowering the water table already negatively affected by off shore gas and oil extraction. In addition unconventional gas extraction will industrialise the landscape with well pads, storage pits, treatment plants, pipelines and roads as well as increasing volumes of heavy traffic on existing local roads. I am particularly concerned about the extensive network of pipelines that would be necessary to make the industry viable given that we live in an area of high fire and earthquake risk (Black Saturday fires in 2009 and a 5.3 earthquake in 2012).

Higher population densities and smaller farms compared to Queensland (where the industry is well established) would mean significantly higher numbers of people and farms would be negatively impacted by unconventional gas extraction. I will be one of those people. Furthermore I am concerned about property values, the rental market (and the possibility of displacing low income families), air and noise pollution, the loss of tourism, the reduced liveability and attractiveness of the area and the damage that could be done to the Gippsland "brand" which currently enjoys a reputation of being a producer of high quality foods.

Unconventional gas extraction poses a significant threat to the future of Boolarra and the surrounding districts. We should protect our farms, our towns, our land and our water for generations to come and not compromise them for the short term financial gains of a few predominantly internationally owned mining companies. Victoria has enough off shore gas to supply the domestic market for decades and any damaging onshore gas industry would only supply the international market thereby raising the domestic price and increasing the risk of shortages.

I believe that the onshore gas extraction industry should be prevented from ever operating in and around Boolarra, throughout Gippsland and also the rest of Victoria. And I know I am not alone. Almost 90% of property owners in my community are against any new mining and more than 500 residents have signed a survey indicating they are against any gas fields. The industry has no social licence to operate in this area and should never be allowed to do so. I urge you to recommend a complete ban on the onshore extraction of gas in Victoria.

Sincerely,

Brian Lawrence.