

With respect to the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry Into Unconventional Gas in Victoria I, Heinz de Chelard make the following submission:

## Introduction

In this submission I will argue that the onshore gas industry must be banned in Victoria in order to maintain the integrity of the ground water supplies, human health and agricultural output of some of the most productive agricultural land in Australia.

## Risk

Risk is typically defined as the likelihood of an incident occurring multiplied by the consequences of that incident occurring. Risk measured this way is often determined using a Risk Matrix similar to that shown in Figure 1.

Likelihood	Consequences				
	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
Almost certain	M	H	H	E	E
Likely	M	M	H	H	E
Possible	L	M	M	H	E
Unlikely	L	M	M	M	H
Rare	L	L	M	M	H

Figure 1 An example of a commonly used Risk Matrix.

Incidents and accidents associated with the onshore gas industry, including shale gas and coal seam gas, where these activities have been underway for many years in Australia and other countries are well documented. Applying the risk matrix shown in Figure 1 to each aspect of the Terms of Reference it can be shown that although in some cases the likelihood of an event occurring may be rare or unlikely, the consequences of an incident with respect to these aspects is often severe or catastrophic. To be economically viable it is also known that the onshore gas industry requires hundreds if not thousands of wells spread over large areas of land, further increasing the likelihood of an incident occurring.

## Democracy

We live in a democracy. More than 96% of people surveyed in areas covered by onshore gas exploration licences oppose the establishment of this industry in Victoria. The majority of Councils in exploration licence areas have declared their Shires to be Gas Field Free. The people who live in these regions are highly aware of the damage to human health, water supplies and the environment that this industry has caused in other countries and in other states of Australia. The overwhelming majority of people in the affected areas want the onshore gas industry banned and as such it should be banned. This industry does not have a social licence to operate in Victoria.

### **Lack of Shared Fate**

The science of human behavior recognises a condition known as ‘Lack of Shared Fate’. Lack of Shared Fate occurs when one person or a group of people are willing to support a decision for which the outcome can have severe or catastrophic consequences which will not affect those supporting the decision. The onshore gas industry and those who would seek to impose this industry on Victorians are highly unlikely to live and work in the affected areas. As such, they suffer a Lack of Shared Fate when it comes to dealing with the impacts and consequences of this industry.

### **Courageous Decisions**

It will be a courageous politician who defies the will of the public by trying to force an industry on the people of Victoria which can only exist through taxpayer funded subsidies, the privatising of profits and the socialising of the losses. In the case of the onshore gas industry these losses are not only financial but also include the loss of health and amenity. Health and environmental impacts in Australian states and countries where the onshore gas industry operates are well documented and are the reason that countries and states such as France, Bulgaria, Germany, Scotland and New York State have banned this industry. Does anyone really want to see police used as private security for wealthy multi-national companies to prevent and detain farmers from protesting to protect their land, their health, their livelihoods and their environment from this invasive and unnecessary industry?

The following section addresses Item 2 of the Terms of Reference of the inquiry.

## **(2) the environmental, land productivity and public health risks, risk mitigations and residual risks of onshore unconventional gas activities;**

There are a range of reasons why UCG cannot co-exist with continuing environmental sustainability, land productivity and poses significant risk to public health in the area of a gas field:

- The area of land required to establish a gas industry is very large and requires significant areas of road and pipeline infrastructure to service, and therefore cannot co-exist within the bounds of existing agricultural operations and native forest reserves.
- As per the risk matrix (Figure 1) and known significant water, land and air contamination incidents in Australia and countries with an established UCG industry the risk to safe food production and human health in affected areas is too great.
- Competition for and risk of contamination of ground and surface water: The UCG industry requires very large volumes of water and must also dispose of very large volumes of contaminated water. This poses a direct threat to agriculture in the industrial zone and beyond and the industry should therefore not be considered.
- Gas flaring will be required at numerous locations. Flaring is known to cause disruptive light pollution and the emission of significant quantities of human carcinogens and green house gases. Who has the right to impact the health of children, families and communities to such an extent? Can the health system afford yet another unnecessary impost?
- Compressor stations will be required at a number of locations. Each compressor in its sound reducing housing still produces annoying and damaging volumes of noise. The industry and

some politicians may consider it their right to impose these impacts on farmers and livestock in regional areas. This once again is a clear demonstration of Lack of Shared Fate.

- Who is going to accept financial responsibility for contamination incidents that result in damage to agricultural production and the clean green reputation of food from affected areas? It is known that 100% of gas wells will fail at some time. Is the tax payer going to be left to once again carry the burden of an industry that has a reputation for privatising the profits and socialising the losses, in the same way that GDF Suez are refusing to pay the tax payers of Victoria the \$18 million cost of fighting the Morwell fire in a coal mine over which they claim ownership (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-07/hazelwood-owners-refusal-to-pay-firefighting-bill-disappointing/6599698>)?

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