

**From:** David Williams [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 July 2015 9:08 PM  
**To:** EPC  
**Subject:** UCG Inquiry Submission

The Secretary, Environment and Planning Committee

Parliament House, Spring St Melbourne 3001

*Good Morning*

My name is David Williams. I am an independent small business consultant living in Sandringham. Both myself and my wife, Annette, do not support any form of unconventional gas mining (UCG). We do not want our state and its people suffering the consequences of illness and ill health as is currently seriously affecting Queensland people as a result of fracking in their state.

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

By allowing mining of UCG in our state we run the real risk of long term contamination and damage to our water supplies, arable farmland, community health, food security, the environment and jobs in other sectors such as agriculture & tourism. We need to legislate to protect our state and its scarce resources and preserve them for future generations. We need to provide certainty for current and future tourism operators and industry investment in food production, water supply and ensure we retain valuable and scarce farming land free from contaminants to protect our export markets.

## **2. The environmental, land productivity and public health risks, risk mitigation and residual risks of onshore unconventional gas activities.**

a. Overseas and current Australian experience shows that risk mitigation of drilling and mining for underground gas is sadly lacking. There are countless examples of people suffering ill effects from emissions from mines located within metres of their homes. (The latest examples were aired on SBS News this evening). Exploration and mining companies should not be allowed anywhere near habitable areas where landowners invested their savings in a family home with no hint at that time that their rights to the land would be subject to such abuse and loss of value. Under current legislation there appears to be no recourse for these landowners in our state. This is grossly unfair. The laws on mining rights and exploration were passed very early in our history before we became aware of the serious ramifications of un-fettered access by mining companies and before fracking was invented. Our land values need to be protected.

b. Our state with its much denser population than rural Queensland, will be more greatly affected should the proposed UCG be allowed to proceed. Landowners and investors need the protection of the law and certainty of their rights to live and work in an unpolluted environment on land which they own.

### **3. The coexistence of onshore unconventional gas activities with existing land and water uses.**

a. Farmers can ill afford large tracts of their existing arable land to be taken over for the required mining infrastructure including all weather access roads, cleared well pads, compression stations, evaporation dams and other impositions.

b. With the rapid decline in our manufacturing industry we need to focus on other key activities such as agriculture and tourism which will continue to provide jobs and growth for our economy well into the future. We should not pursue investments in short term and finite gas reserves which will be far more expensive to produce than LPG and which do not have a future in an increasingly environmentally conscious world.

### **4. The ability of potential onshore unconventional gas resources contributing to the State's overall energy sources.**

a. Because UCG is by definition a fossil fuel requiring significant investment in order for the gas to be located, infrastructure built and the gas released from the coal seam or rock, the energy cost of the gas is high compared with conventional LNG.

b. Should the gas be exported through ports in QLD, Victorian consumers will be competing with international energy prices in coming years. So UCG is unlikely to be an affordable alternative energy source for consumers. A much better option would be to look at ways we can reduce our need to use gas (for instance through ensuring better energy efficiency standards in new homes and a government funded energy efficiency retrofit program for existing houses).

### **5. The resource knowledge requirements and policy and regulatory safeguards that would be necessary to enable exploration and development of onshore unconventional gas resources.**

The UCG industry has consistently shown in Australia and overseas that it has a poor regard for safety regulation or a strong record of safe practices. Examples of exploration 'accidents', water and land pollution appear in our news bulletins almost on a monthly basis. Legislative controls appear to have little if any effect on controlling these incidents and once our water or land is polluted it will be difficult if not impossible to rectify.

### **Recommendation:**

Our recommendation is that the Victorian Government bans all unconventional gas drilling permanently thus protecting our environment and valuable resources, giving certainty to investors in key sustainable industry sectors such as agriculture

and tourism which are so vital to strengthen our economy and support future jobs growth.

Thank you for your consideration.



***David Williams CPI***



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