

From: David Tomkins [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 7 July 2015 11:00 PM
To: EPC
Subject: Submission to the Victorian Government Inquiry into Unconventional Gas
Importance: High

Dear Committee members

I am a retired medical scientist who owns property on the Surf Coast in Victoria. I am concerned about the health impacts, climate impacts and water and food security issues raised by unconventional gas mining.

I do not support any form of unconventional gas mining (including coal seam gas, tight gas, shale gas & underground coal gasification).

I do not believe this industry has a social licence to operate in my area and that I will never support it, no matter the potential regulations put in place.

I recommend that Victoria ban all unconventional gas drilling permanently (and the benefits of a total ban e.g. giving certainty to existing industry (agriculture & tourism), making Victoria a more attractive place for investments in these industries plus new investments such as renewables. This will create more long term jobs in sustainable industries.

Terms of Reference:

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

Why would we put at risk water, farmland, community health, food security, environment and jobs in other sectors such as agriculture & tourism for little or no financial gain?

2. the environmental, land productivity and public health risks, risk mitigations and residual risks of onshore unconventional gas activities

I have followed closely the experiences of those in the US and Queensland (I grew up in Brisbane and have family scattered all over Queensland) and believe that the impacts felt in QLD would be even worse here due to our more densely populated region.

3. the coexistence of onshore unconventional gas activities with existing land and water uses

A key issue relating to this industry is the question of its likely impacts on agricultural production and domestic and export market requirements.

Figures from local council and government websites show what our existing industries (agriculture in particular) are worth to the State's economy and their potential for growth. This is put in jeopardy if unconventional gas mining goes ahead.

(b) the legal rights of property owners and the impact on property values

I would definitely refuse to allow access to my property for exploration or mining and would fight this with all the resources I could muster.

(c) any implications for local and regional development, investment and jobs

It is clear to me, from the Queensland experience, that UCG will not create many jobs, but will put jobs at risk in other sectors.

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

Unconventional Gas is a fossil fuel. By definition, unconventional gases are harder to extract than conventional gas.

(a) an ability to provide a competitive source of energy and non-energy inputs for Victorian industries

We need to be providing future energy inputs for Victorian industries from renewable sources.

(b) an affordable energy source for domestic consumers; and

Because they need to be fracked to release the gas from the coal seam or rock, the energy cost of the gas is high compared with conventional LNG. Additionally, with the government plans to export massive volumes of gas through ports in QLD, Victorian consumers will be competing with international energy prices in coming years. So UCG is unlikely to be an affordable energy source for consumers. A much better option is 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, etc.

(c) carbon dioxide emissions from these sources

Emissions and fugitive emissions from UCG are massive compared with renewable energy sources and often have a bigger impact on the atmosphere than any potential saving of gas compared with coal. Air pollution from gas treatment plants also has major human health impacts.

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

This industry (regardless of regulation) has failed to be proven safe elsewhere. The industry has had a long time to prove that their practices are safe and yet have been unable to do so. Even if the UCG industry can reduce its risks, it will always pose a risk, and any risk (particularly to our water, food and air) is too great.

Unconventional Gas is an industry that perpetuates our unsustainable dependence on fossil fuel, a dependence that is putting our survival at risk.

I urge to the Victorian Government to permanently ban the dangerous and destructive Unconventional Gas industry in Victoria.

Yours faithfully

David Tomkins
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