

From: Inquiry into Unconventional Gas POV eSubmission Form
<cso@parliament.vic.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 8 July 2015 12:47 PM
To: EPC
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into Unconventional Gas in Victoria.

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Unconventional Gas in Victoria.

Mr Dominic O'Dwyer
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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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Dear Committee members,

I am a hospitality worker who grew up in Melbourne and South Gippsland. Four years ago, I learnt that my parents property in Foster was under license for coal seam gas exploration (EL5322). This prompted my parents, other family members who live in the area and I to research an industry we were otherwise unfamiliar with.

Our first impression, after looking at images of gasfields in Queensland, was deep concern over the visual impact they would have on an area which prides itself on agriculture and tourism. On conducting further investigation, hearing about the potential impacts on human health, water and air, we became shocked that the government was allowing this industry to proceed at all. There have been numerous documented cases of spills and contamination, which could have serious flow on effects, including recently reported incidents in the Pilliga and Gloucester.

Foster, like many South Gippsland towns has experienced exciting growth over the past decade. This is due largely to the number of people coming to visit from Melbourne and further afield. New cafes, galleries and restaurants have sprung in the towns that dot the South Gippsland Highway, notably in Loch, Meeniyan, Fish Creek and Foster. The idea that these booming regional communities could happily co-exist with the unconventional gas industry defies logic. Gasfield developments require heavy volumes of water and chemicals transported by truck, scar the landscape with webs of well-sites, produce noise and have the potential to contaminate air and water locally. All these factors would seriously undermine the area's appeal for visitors.

The effect the industry poses to agriculture is similar. My parents farm produces grass-fed beef and lamb. Being able to find a market for these products is dependent on a widely held perception that they are healthy products, derived from animals that have been raised in a clean environment. An unconventional gas industry in the region would pose a direct threat to the image of South Gippsland's agricultural produce, and

therefore our ability to find a market for it.

In addition, the infrastructure required for gasfields (road networks, well pads, dams and compression stations) and the constant movement of vehicles would make the day-to-day running of a farm extremely difficult. In densely populated, high-value agricultural land, co-existence is not viable.

The companies holding licenses in Victoria have no significant experience in producing unconventional gas and therefore no solid basis for their claims that there will be no detrimental impacts. Furthermore, the experience of governments in Australia and around the world shows that there can be no guarantee of effective regulation for an industry using unconventional methods with numerous and dispersed production sites .

Whilst it is not specifically within the terms of the inquiry, I urge the committee to consider also the stress that rural communities bear as a result of the threat of an unconventional gas industry. Whilst it is heartening to see so many different communities across Victoria (around 60 I believe) declare themselves 'Gasfield Free', the need to campaign is also a huge burden for these communities. It is deeply concerning that both the current and previous governments have wavered and presented conflicting messages. As a result, many communities have felt the need to protect themselves from this invasive industry. The certainty that a long-term ban would give our communities, will allow people to focus on their work and family life, rather than having energy and time diverted by the threat of gasfield developments.

I urge the Committee to consider the interests of all Victorians - the importance of food production, the well-being of rural communities, clean air and water – and institute a long-term ban on the unconventional gas industry.

Sincerely,

Dominic O'Dwyer

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File1:

File2:

File3: