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From: Inquiry into Unconventional Gas POV eSubmission Form
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Sent: Wednesday, 8 July 2015 8:31 PM
To: EPC
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into Unconventional Gas in Victoria.
Attachments: 559cfbf099730-Map survey area july 2015jpg; 559cfbf09918f-GFB Inquiry response July15.doc

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Unconventional Gas in Victoria.

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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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Please refer to the first file attached for the submission content (GFB Inquiry Response July15.doc).

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File1: [559cfbf09918f-GFB Inquiry response July15.doc](#)

File2: [559cfbf099730-Map survey area july 2015jpg](#)

File3:

Submission to Inquiry on Unconventional Gas in Victoria From: Gasfield Free Bairnsdale (GFB)

Thank you for the opportunity to inform the Parliamentary Committee about the nature and extent of our opposition to unconventional gas mining.

Background and Overview of Our Group

Gasfield Free Bairnsdale (GFB) was formed in November 2013, by a group of local residents; we are all volunteers. We are one of many such groups across Victoria. When we heard there was an exploration mining licence (EL4416) for unconventional gas mining in our area, the biggest licence in Gippsland, we decided to hold a public meeting and information night on 5th December 2013, in Paynesville. Over 150 people attended this meeting.

As a result of attending the meeting at Paynesville, members of the Meerlieu & District community requested a public meeting for their community; this was held at the Meerlieu Hall in February 2014. Over 60 people attended.

Since that time local residents have been door knocking where there is an exploration mining licence to inform landholders about the licence and to ask a survey question "Do you want your land gasfield free?" Lock the Gate signs have been sold and put on gates where landholders chose to do this (these are no trespass signs to mining companies). At the end of the surveying, community declaration events have been held to present the outcome of the survey question. 20 road signs have been erected on private land to advertise the declaration result. Refer to the attached map showing where surveying has been completed.

The following is a summary of what has happened so far:

- ❖ Over 600 yellow triangular lock the gate "no trespass" signs are on gates;
- ❖ 2 declaration events have been held:
 - 1st was on 5th October 2014 at Meerlieu: 450 people were surveyed in 4 districts of: Perry Bridge; Meerlieu; Goon Nure; and Bengworden. 98% of the survey respondents said "no" to gasfields on their land. Over 200 people attended and participated in a "No Gasfields" sign made from utes; and
 - 2nd was on 12th April 2015 at Eagle Point: 207 people were surveyed in 5 districts of: East Bairnsdale, Nicholson, Broadlands, Newlands Arm & Eagle Point. 98% of survey respondents said "no" to gasfields on their land. Over 130 people attended.
- ❖ Another 100 people have been surveyed in Forge Creek. Surveying will be completed here and in: Hillside; Calulu; Wy Yung; Bairnsdale (district not town) and Lindenow in the next couple of months.
- ❖ **A total of over 750 people have been surveyed where there is an exploration mining licence, with 98% of the respondents saying "NO" to gasfields on their land.**
- ❖ The movie "Frackman" screened at the Bairnsdale Sun Cinema on 6th May 2015. **Bairnsdale had the largest audience in Victoria** with 177 of the 200 possible seats in the cinema filled. Senator Ricky Muir attended and spoke during the Q&A session (at the Senator's instigation).

Issues

The following points are made in relation to the issues that are to be examined by the Committee.

i) **The potential benefits of onshore unconventional gas as an energy source for the State**

- ❖ All of the evidence and information shows that the current extraction of unconventional gas in Australia is for export to meet export contracts with Asia **so there will be no potential benefits of unconventional gas as an energy source for the State.**
- ❖ Current data shows that gas consumption in Australia is falling. The committee should refer to data as evidence of this published fact.
- ❖ Geosciences Australia has stated there is enough supply of gas offshore in Victoria to last for over 60 years (refer to page 6 of the following parliamentary paper):
<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/publications/research-papers/8927-unconventional-gas-coal-seam-gas-shale-gas-and-tight-gas/download>
- ❖ It is in the gas industry's interest to say there is a shortage because that will drive up the price. Refer to these articles for more information:
<http://www.smh.com.au/business/gas-majors-hot-air-and-supply-20131201-2yjqq.html>
<http://www.theage.com.au/business/-1msfqb.html>
- ❖ Gas prices are not rising because there is a lack of supply, the gas price is rising because of a deliberate strategy by the gas companies to make our gas available for export so that the gas companies can receive a higher price for the gas; this is a dash for cash and the gas companies need more gas supplies which is why Victoria is now being targeted:
<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/business/fracking-will-not-keep-local-gas-prices-from-rising/story-fni0dcne-1226755357248>
- ❖ Evidence from California shows that the life of wells is much shorter than the anticipated 15 years with 9 years being the average life. It is likely that we would put at risk the value of our local industries and tourism for a short term benefit for an industry that is largely foreign owned, where the gas resource will be going overseas and not for domestic use.
- ❖ There is still so much to understand about the risks/impacts of this industry to put everything at risk when this gas is not to be used by Victorian consumers (refer to risks on the next page).

ii) The potential risks, including risks to the environment, land productivity, agricultural industries and public health, and whether such risks can be managed

- ❖ A Research Paper by the Research Service of the Parliamentary Library entitled “Unconventional Gas: Coal Seam Gas, Shale Gas and Tight Gas” December 2013 is provided at the link below for the information of the Committee. Chapter 2 of the paper provides most of the risks and presents information relevant to many of the terms of reference of this Inquiry. This paper provides evidence and information supporting our concerns and claims within the Australian context. It states on page 14, “...*identifies a number of potential issues with the production of coal seam gas that may have negative environmental and social impacts. These issues include the large amount of water pumped out of coal seams to release the gas and the potential associated impacts this may cause: the potential environmental implications of fracking which may involve the risk of creating new fractures in the rock that intersect adjacent aquifers and contaminate water resources; and the leakage of methane, also known as ‘fugitive emissions’there is a concern that farms may be impacted by the access and use of land and water resources by gas companies.*” In that Paper, risks are discussed in more detail as follows:
 - Produced Water (pages 15 -18) Volume, Depletion of Groundwater and Inter-Aquifer Connectivity, Subsidence, Quality of Produced Water, Disposal of Produced Water
 - Fracking (pages 18 – 22) Potential Environmental Impacts, Use of Chemicals in Fracking Fluids
 - Fugitive Emissions (pages 22 - 23)
 - Lack of Data and Data Sharing (pages 24 – 25)
 - Agriculture and Land Access (pages 25 – 26)
 - Impact of Surface Infrastructure on Environment (page 26)

The paper states that based on information from CSIRO that “groundwater impacts may not become evident for years” (page 24) and that “further research is needed to assess the cumulative effects of chemical mixtures to identify potential risks to human health and the environment” (page 21).

The precautionary principle requires that the Victorian Government ensures the community is protected. This report is compulsory reading and I would suggest there is great value in having this report brought up to date as the evidence would be even more compelling against proceeding with unconventional gas mining in Victoria:

<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/publications/research-papers/8927-unconventional-gas-coal-seam-gas-shale-gas-and-tight-gas/download>

- ❖ As stated on the website for our local sitting member Hon Tim Bull MP: “*East Gippsland is home to many important industries that drive the local economy including tourism, fishing, agriculture and horticulture. The region has a promising future and is a great place to both visit and live.*” No one will want to visit or live in a gasfield; these industries will be threatened.

- ❖ It is hard to believe that an exploration mining licence for unconventional gas could have been approved over water storage facilities, (e.g. Eagle Point) on our rivers (including the Mitchell River which is the water supply for Bairnsdale) and the RAMSAR protected Gippsland Lakes that the Government has the responsibility to protect under a treaty it signed. The Gippsland Lakes RAMSAR sites are wetlands that are of international importance under the “Ramsar Convention on Wetlands” and offer significant habitat for migratory birds and other threatened species. The “Mitchell River Silt Jetties,” now the largest such delta system in the world also has an exploration mining licence on it. **How is it possible that a mining licence was approved over such areas? The Government has a responsibility to protect these areas that are of international significance.** Not only shouldn't there be a licence over these areas, there should not be any mining near them or where runoff could occur into the waterways. Gippsland is known for its flooding; this creates a further risk with the real possibility of waste materials from mining entering our waterways, particularly if evaporation ponds are allowed.
- ❖ Gippsland is a known seismic hotspot. It would be irresponsible to allow fracking to occur as fracking is a known contributor to earthquake activity.
- ❖ Our prime agricultural land needs to be protected. We are producing products that have brand recognition for cleanliness as reflected in a recent visit to East Gippsland by prominent Melbourne restaurant owners.
- ❖ Tourism is a significant contributor to the local and Victorian economy. The Gippsland Lakes waterways system is a popular vacation location; this won't be the case if the Lakes system is damaged and/or the area becomes an industrial landscape. The financial value of all forms of tourism is at risk.
- ❖ According to the State Government's “Economic Impact of Game Hunting in Victoria 2013 Report,” shooters spent \$76m in Gippsland in 2014. The Field and Game Club in Bengworden has an exploration mining licence on its land. Should the Gippsland Lakes be impacted this would have serious implications for this significant contributor to the Victorian economy.
- ❖ Public Health and psychological impacts in Australia are further documented in reports by Dr Wayne Somerville who has made a submission to this Inquiry (Submission No. 21). His reports are important reading for members of the Committee.
- ❖ Countries and States in the United States have taken the step of putting in place a ban either permanently or for a specified period to ensure more evidence is gathered or the unconventional gas industry does not proceed until evidence is found that it is safe. Please refer to iii) below for a list.

Government's have a duty of care to do no harm and not increase the public health burden on future generations.

iii) Whether and how an unconventional gas industry could coexist with the legal rights of property owners and existing land and water uses

- ❖ One year ago this article stated that a detailed report by the NSW Valuer General suggested that a mature coal seam gas industry may reduce property values. A current report should be sought from both the NSW and QLD Valuer General:
<http://coalseamgasnews.org/news/world/australia/nsw/cant-sell-cant-insure-in-a-gasfield-auspol/>
- ❖ We need our agricultural land for food to feed us. Gas mining licences are on prime agricultural land. Evidence shows that gas wells are lasting well below the expected 15 years (9 years in California). We are putting at risk a commodity that would be difficult to reinstate given the chemicals used and high volumes of water that would be depleted from the aquifers that are required for agriculture/horticulture.
- ❖ There are biosecurity issues that have to be met on farms. The volume and nature of truck/vehicle traffic would make biosecurity a major issue.
- ❖ Given the nature of sheep farming it cannot coexist with gas mining.
- ❖ Farming in Victoria is different to Queensland and is more intensive, more fencing and productivity of the land is higher. This is a factor that needs consideration.
- ❖ Farmers should not have to be put in a position to have to defend their livelihood; this is outrageous! There will be some farmers who are not producing on their land however the bulk would be forced out eventually should this industry proceed. Although the right of veto has been proposed, this will put farmer against farmer and those that sell out will enable the industry to get a foothold and what will eventuate is what we see in Queensland where farmers have been forced off their land because they can't live with the noise and pollution of living in a gasfield.
- ❖ It is not appropriate to have gasfields near where people live. Would members of the Committee want to live in a gasfield?
- ❖ Please refer above (item ii) to comments about the Gippsland Lakes and this RAMSAR protected site. Gasfields will impact significantly on this area as migratory birds will not be able to co-exist with the noise/lights and pollution. The Lakes is also home to unique indigenous protected dolphins which could be impacted by changes in water quality.
- ❖ A water study was to have been undertaken and provided to the Inquiry. It has been stated in a public forum that the aquifer system in East Gippsland is very complicated and that it is not totally understood; it would be irresponsible to allow mining companies access to aquifers here, particularly as large volumes of water are required for the fracking process and not enough is known about how the water system works.

iv) How this issue is managed in other Australian and international jurisdictions

Outright Fracking Bans

USA

New York – December 2014 – this was implemented on the basis of health risks after expert investigation and the publication of a New York State Department of Health Report. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/18/nyregion/cuomo-to-ban-fracking-in-new-york-state-citing-health-risks.html?_r=0

https://www.health.ny.gov/press/reports/docs/high_volume_hydraulic_fracturing.pdf

San Benito County, California – April 2014

http://www.mercurynews.com/science/ci_26866639/san-benito-countys-measure-j-voters-backing-anti

Mendocino County, California – 4th November 2014 – this ban on fracking was implemented as part of a community Bill of Rights to “natural and chemical free communities and ecosystems, a clean environment, and self-government by the people, without manipulation and overwhelming influence from corporations.”

It imposes considerable penalties for breaches.

http://ballotpedia.org/Mendocino_County_Community_Bill_of_Rights_Fracking_and_Water_Use_Initiative,_Measure_S_%28November_2014%29

Santa Cruz County, California – May 2014 -

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/21/california-fracking-idUSL1N00700J20140521>

Highland Park, New Jersey - Sep 17, 2013 – An ordinance to ban fracking was passed by Highland Park Borough Council.

http://www.nj.com/middlesex/index.ssf/2013/09/highland_park_becomes_first_town_in_nj_to_ban_fracking.html

Secaucus, New Jersey – 26th June, 2012 - The mayor and Town Council banned fracking and fracking waste water “in a resolution that states that the drilling process causes environmental hazards.”

http://hudsonreporter.com/view/full_story/19312259/article-Secaucus-bans-%E2%80%98fracking%E2%80%99-Local-officials-also-call-for-statewide-and-national-ban-?instance=secondary_stories_left_column

Denton, Texas, – 4th November 2014 - by citizen ballot – permanently prohibits fracking within the city limits.

<http://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/headlines/20141105-denton-fracking-ban-passed-in-landslide1.ece>

Hawaii – October 2013 - unanimous County council bill banned hydraulic fracturing. <http://hawaiitribune-herald.com/sections/news/local-news/council-oks-ban-fracking.html>

Vermont – 17th May 2012 – Vermont was the first US state to ban fracking. The Governor stated that protection of drinking water is more important than increased access to natural gas.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/17/vermont-fracking-ban-first_n_1522098.html

UK

Wales - from February 2015 – “effectively making it impossible for shale gas developments to receive planning permits in Wales.”

<https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/wales-votes-against-shale-gas-190742367.html>

Northern Ireland – July 2014 – the environment minister promised that there will be no fracking in Northern Ireland unless it can be proved “safe beyond doubt”. <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/news/fracking-drilling-will-not-be-allowed-in-northern-ireland-unless-its-proven-safe-warns-environment-minister-mark-h-durkan-30469238.html>

Europe

France -30th June 2011 - Ban on hydraulic fracturing was voted in by parliament. The International Energy Agency claims that France has more plentiful reserves of shale gas than most of Europe, but France’s Constitutional council threw out a 2013 challenge to the law by US based Schuepbach Energy

<http://www.dw.de/french-court-rejects-challenge-to-anti-fracking-legislation/a-17151744>

Current President François Hollande has promised the ban will be maintained for his five-year term. <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-23311963>

Luxembourg – 13th November 2012 – the Luxembourg parliament voted against a motion to extract underground shale gas based on environmental concerns.

<http://www.wort.lu/en/luxembourg/no-fracking-of-shale-gas-in-luxembourg-50a37ff8e4b0e83edf95f923>

Bulgaria – 18th January 2012 - Bulgaria banned exploratory drilling for shale gas. On 14th June 2012 Bulgaria imposed an absolute ban on fracking and revoked Chevron’s shale gas permit.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/14/bulgaria-bans-shale-gas-exploration>

Spain – 30th January, 2014 – fracking was banned in Catalonia as part of the urban planning law.

http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2014/02/01/catalunya/1391210321_238105.html

– fracking was also banned in Cantabria, followed by La Rioja and Navarra later that year.

http://sociedad.elpais.com/sociedad/2013/04/08/actualidad/1365443283_986703.html

“The Rioja Government has implemented the principles of preventive action and caution advocating the European Union (EU) on environmental protection.”

<http://www.larioja.com/20130531/local/region/gobierno-rioja-prohibe-usar-201305311150.html>

Navarra – banned hydraulic fracturing for exploration and extraction “under the provisions of the Regional Law of Urban Planning and Land Regime of Navarre.” http://www.diariodenavarra.es/noticias/navarra/mas_navarra/2013/10/10/el_parlamento_prohibe_quot_fracking_quot_navarra_pese_upn_ppn_132959_2061.html

Canton of Fribourg, Switzerland – April 2011. Decision not to renew exploration licence of Schuepbach Energy, and all other licences suspended “for an undetermined period.” <http://coalseamgasnews.org/news/world/switzerland-joins-worldwide-ban-on-gas-fracking/>

Austria – March 2014 - a fracking ban was enshrined in the Vorarlberg State Constitution. <http://www.vol.at/fracking-verbot-wird-in-vorarlberger-landesverfassung-verankert/3907751>

Italy – September 2014 – a ban introduced as part of the Law of Stability 2014 in order to protect groundwater and soil and promote “efficient use of national water resources.” <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2014/09/04/fracking-commissione-ambiente-da-vietare-il-ministero-mai-autorizzato/1110626/>

New Zealand

Christchurch/Aotearoa– April 2012 – A unanimous vote by Christchurch City Council to declare the city a frack free zone, citing impact on the local environment, water supply and earthquakes. <http://archived.ccc.govt.nz/council/proceedings/2012/april/cnclcover12th/ConfirmedMinutesCouncil12April2012.pdf>

Kaikoura – April, 2012 - The Kaikoura District Council declared itself a frack-free zone.

v) Potential changes to our legislative and regulatory framework

- ❖ Given the much published open cut coal fire that occurred in Morwell last year following the failure to follow existing regulations, there is no confidence that legislation and regulation will prevent environmental disasters and well failures.
- ❖ I refer the Committee to the Submission from Dr Matthew Currell (# 11) where he says “The US EPA data recently showed that it is very difficult to completely avoid pollution incidents associated with flow-back or produced water if significant unconventional gas development occurs, and that this has impacts on shallow groundwater and surface water. Similar issues are faced in areas of Australia where coal seam gas development has been significant.
- There is regulation in place and yet AGL was fined for an EPA violation (which was an inadequate level of fine). There is insufficient information to ensure the industry is regulated appropriately for Victorian conditions.

- ❖ Wells are acknowledged to fail and no regulation will prevent that. Given the large number of wells, as a consequence there will be problems. I further cite Dr Currell “Proponents of the unconventional gas industry argue that with adequate controls and protocols on well construction and maintenance, problems of this nature can be avoided. However, Jackson et al, (2013b) cited petroleum industry data which showed that in some areas of intensive oil and gas production (e.g. Alberta, Canada; Gulf of Mexico, U.S.), on the order of 5 to 20% of historically drilled wells show evidence of poor seals and therefore may act as pathways for gas migration. The risk of this pathway increases with both the number of wells drilled and with the time since drilling and development took place. Whether all wells (water, gas, oil, active, inactive, abandoned) can be effectively monitored and prevented from acting as pathways for methane contamination in a given area of mining is a question of critical importance to the future viability of the onshore gas industry worldwide. There are serious doubts about whether well-integrity can be ensured for long enough periods of time and in a large enough number of wells to prevent gas migration and contamination over the long-term”.
- ❖ Resources to currently monitor EPA infringements are inadequate so there is no faith that any regulations would be able to be effectively monitored; the current fines for noncompliance are inadequate.

Conclusion

- The strong opposition to unconventional gas mining from communities that have to potentially live in a gasfield is growing (over 60 communities have now said NO to gasfields on their land). These voices need to be heeded as these are the people who are most impacted.
- Consideration must be given to the many industries (tourism, horticulture, agriculture, and fishing) and the internationally significant natural resources that could be detrimentally impacted that cannot co-exist with gas mining; the loss side of the equation is significant (refer to data from the Australia Institute for corroboration).
- Current data shows there is not a shortage of gas offshore in Victoria (60 year supply) and that the demand for gas by Australian consumers is decreasing. This gas is not destined for domestic consumption and extracting it is what will contribute to increasing the domestic price (world parity pricing). The real pressure at the moment is that the gas companies don't have enough gas to meet their contracts overseas so they are trying to raid whatever they can to get the higher price for the gas to meet those contracts, hence their interest in Victorian unconventional gas to be piped to Queensland.
- There is insufficient information to ensure the industry is regulated appropriately for Victorian conditions and its geology.
- The documented risks of CSG mining from Australia and overseas continues to grow and the only safe outcome is for a total ban on unconventional gas mining as some countries around the world and States in the United States have done, or at a minimum, to extend the moratorium for another five years as the VFF has recently considered.

Approved Exploration Licence Areas

Coal Seam Gas/Tight Gas/ Fracking

- A serious threat to our water, our livelihoods and our health



MINING COMPANIES

Ignite Energy Resources Pty Ltd (Coal & Coal Seam Gas)	
Petro Tech Pty Ltd (Lakes Oil) (Oil & Tight Gas)	

LANDOWNERS SURVEYED 98%

Help **LOCK THE GATE**

We stand with rural Victorian communities to protect **OUR FOOD, OUR WATERSUPPLY & OUR CLIMATE** from destructive coal and gas mining

Said 'NO' to GASFIELDS

www.lockthegate.org.au

Surveyed Area