

I have been a consultant geologist working as a wellsite geologist & petroleum engineer on oil rigs for over 40 years. In onshore Victoria alone I have been on well over 50 different wells, and have worked on different drilling rigs throughout Australia and internationally. I was also the chosen geologist to supervise the data collection for the experimental carbon dioxide sequestration wells in Victoria, as well as being the chosen geologist to supervise the first coal seam methane gas wells drilled in Australia with instructions to ensure all relevant safety and government regulations were complied with.

I have watched with horror and dismay the grossly misleading reports on drilling emanating from so-called informative journalism from our media.

To correct this please note the following:

1: Victoria has NO coal seam gas potential - the brown coal in Gippsland is immature and does NOT contain adsorbed hydrocarbon gas.

The only black coals in Victoria of suitable quality to have a potential for coal seam gas production are too thin to have any commercial value.

2: Deep fracturing as with shale oil/gas is an entirely different thing to the shallow fracturing used on coal seam gas wells - it is like comparing the contamination from a Boeing 747 to that of a hang glider just because they are both have the same name "flying machines". Deep fracturing requires impermeable rocks to be present that are of considerable thickness to be viable - hence are very much separated and isolated from any water aquifer - if the fracs from a deep well were to intersect into any water column it immediately makes the well non viable and useless, hence no one would be stupid enough to frac a deep well anywhere near any water aquifer.

3: Conventional wells have been drilled by the thousands throughout the world without in general any major environmental problems except for a few gross cases where significant lapses on the part of substandard employees are involved - however due to the high level of expertise used on rigs in Australia this problem with 2nd rate personnel is not a concern here (more appropriate to 3rd world countries). Australian supervision of rigs is amongst worlds best practise. It can also be noted from personal experience, any problems which do occur with rigs anywhere in the world are usually grossly over-exaggerated by the media, often coming close to the point of correctly being labelled fiction.

4: Most of the problems as presented by the media with ground water quality reduction in Queensland are a direct result from the lowering of the water table by excessive outflow from the farming and town communities - the resulting drop in the level of the water table causes the same process to occur in the water aquifer as what is created by water production from the coal seams - ie. The “burning water” and bad smells (hydrogen sulphide and mercaptane gases) are a direct result of the lowering of the water table. These have been present from before the inception of coal seam gas drilling - it is just that this problem gets more exaggerated as the water table gets lower, caused directly from the excessive number of bores now sucking from the aquifer.

5: Since gas is currently one of the cleanest forms of energy available in significant quantities to be able to come on production quickly, it is imperative for our environment that this energy source be given all the help it can in order to be available to replace the more polluting energy sources. It is all very well to talk about replacing the energy requirements of Australia with solar/wind and others, however the world will be destroyed before any of these can make a significant enough impact on our energy requirements.

6: Gas drilling is safe, clean, and a reliable way of getting a replacement for some of the more highly polluting energy sources. Unfortunately, due to the abundance of grossly misleading reports from our media, and a gross misunderstanding of the science leading to a misinterpretation of the data, the entire argument regarding oil/gas drilling, fracking etc is polluted and is being carried to an extreme. This is causing a negative impact to our environment and for our future generations.

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