

08/07/2015 **Submission to the Victorian government's Inquiry into Unconventional Gas (UCG) in Victoria**

From: Ms Susan Quinn

[REDACTED]

I am making a personal submission to the Inquiry as I am very concerned about the dangers of Unconventional Gas (UCG) and the possible establishment of this industry in Victoria. I absolutely oppose this dangerous and destructive industry.

I have a Bachelor of Science and I work in the allied health area as an audiologist, where I hold a masters degree qualification. The science is absolutely clear that we must rapidly phase down carbon emissions if the world is to have any chance of staying below two degrees warming. The science tells us that we have an emergency. Given our knowledge of the risk of dangerous climate change associated with continued burning of fossil fuels, the backing of new UCG projects in Victoria would be a disgraceful undertaking, dangerous to the environment and to public health.

I strongly urge the Committee running the Inquiry to recommend that Victoria adopt a permanent ban on all onshore unconventional gas drilling.

I live in a community that has conducted a survey, and the results showed that the community in Fish Creek South Gippsland has strong opposition to fracking. This removes a social licence basis for an unconventional gas industry to operate in our area. I shall never support an UCG industry, no matter the potential regulations put in place.

I understand the Committee will examine the following issues and my comments are included below:

- *Potential benefits of onshore UCG as an energy source for the State:* There are no benefits for the people of Victoria with an onshore UCG industry, only profits for vested interests. The Victorian government should make energy decisions in the public interest, rather than facilitating economic interests that trump the common good. Support for UCG as some kind of transition energy industry (instead of coal) has the effect of delaying investment in non-carbon energy sources.
- *Potential risks of onshore UCG:* The potential risks are huge and cannot be safely managed. It's actually a myth that UCG is cleaner than coal. The UCG process leaks methane into the atmosphere, which is a far more potent greenhouse gas than CO₂. UCG processes can result in increased earthquakes and land subsidence. The toxic and carcinogenic chemicals used in UCG processes can leak into water supplies. An UCG industry necessitates installation of high density, unsightly gas wells, which operate all day & all night

producing a poisonous and noisy, industrialisation of our regional landscape. The road and transport trucks infrastructure required for an UCG industry also causes ugly degradation of the landscape (as clearly evident in North Dakota U.S.)

- *Whether an UCG industry can coexist with the legal rights of property owners, and existing land and water uses:* The answer is clearly no. UCG production typically involves use of highly toxic chemicals, and also uses enormous amounts of water which is one of Australia's scarcest resources. Undoubtedly the impact of that extremely high water usage on Victoria's water ecology, aquifers and storage would be deleterious. The whole idea of an UCG industry in a "food bowl" region such as South Gippsland is particularly destructive and inappropriate. The region has an established and lucrative dairy and agricultural industry, a commercial fishing industry and tourism industry that would all be threatened by an UCG industry.
- *How is this issue managed in other Australian & international jurisdictions:* There is enormous evidence (for example in Queensland and in Nth America) of the UCG industry causing widespread, permanent environmental destruction, as well as wreaking social havoc in the communities it intrudes upon.
- *Potential changes to our legislative and regulatory framework:* It's a real mistake for the Victorian government to have anything to do with supporting an UCG industry. The Victorian government needs to show strong leadership and commit to research, development and infrastructure for carbon-free energy industries in order to achieve a managed transition away from the extraction and burning of fossil fuels. The goal of de-carbonising Victoria's energy sources is a necessity rather than an option. The destabilisation of the polar icecaps for example, (eg in Antarctica where glaciers are melting at a phenomenal rate) contributes to evidence of the urgency of the climate change situation. Once the process of ice sheet melt is underway it's going to be extremely difficult if not impossible to stop. Top U.S. climate scientist Dr James Hansen reports satellite data that confirms an increasing rate of ice sheet loss, which if it were to continue it would lead to sea level rise of several metres within 40 to 50 years. There would be far less chaos associated with a managed transition to carbon-free energy industries, than for example with the conflicts arising from forced migrations and economic collapse associated with multi-metre sea level rise. There are substantial employment and economic opportunities in developing renewable energies. The Victorian government would benefit electorally by energetically managing the transition to clean energy.