

Colin and Lorraine Brimblecombe

Landowners

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Dear Committee Members,

Re: Inquiry into Unconventional Gas in Victoria

My name is Colin Brimblecombe and I have lived in Nungurner for 28 years.

Moving to Nungurner was a lifestyle choice; a beautiful and peaceful environment surrounded by rural land and with, at that time, strict planning regulations that were designed to ensure the ongoing preservation of the natural environment and rural character of the area.

We see unconventional gas exploration and extraction as a serious threat to the character of the area. We have flown over and driven through gas fields in the USA and other states of Australia and this is not how we believe our state should develop.

We are deeply concerned about the threats to the natural environment. The damage caused by unconventional gas extraction is well documented world wide. States in the USA are banning the practice. It seems unbelievable that new fields would be allowed considering the mounting evidence of environmental damage.

It is an issue, like none other I can think of, with the potential to divide and cause animosity in communities.

If the owner of an adjoining property consents to gas extraction, you, as a neighbour, have to live with the consequences; earthworks, traffic, noise, flaring pipes, fire risk, soil contamination, gas emissions, water contamination and potential falls in land values.

In short, your neighbor has the potential to severely disrupt your living amenity and possibly severely diminish the value of your property.

To add some detail I would like to address some of the terms of reference as follows:

The prospectivity of Victoria's geology for commercial sources of onshore unconventional gas;

It seems the only reason this has become an issue is the drive for relatively short term profits in an international market. We have supplies of conventional gas and enormous potential to develop renewable energy. Why would we risk the future of water quality, farmland, community health, food security and the environment?

The environmental, land productivity and public health risks, risk mitigation and residual risks of onshore unconventional gas.

From my reading and in recent media reports there are serious risks of, and documented incidents of, ground water contamination. This is obviously unacceptable.

The exposure of communities to toxic fugitive emissions from unconventional gas extraction is a serious concern, and the industry does not have a good track record in this regard.

Potential residual risks obviously include contamination of water and soil, as well as the need for ongoing maintenance and monitoring of well casings.

The coexistence of unconventional gas activities with existing land and water uses,

Including-

Agricultural production and domestic and export market requirements;

The extraction process involves pumping enormous amounts of water back into the well. Agriculture could well have a diminished supply of ground water.

Contamination of groundwater and land could seriously harm Australia's clean green image internationally and threaten our access to uncontaminated produce.

Many of our farmers are proud of their stewardship of the land and the improvements they have been able to achieve. Unconventional gas drilling is a retrograde step in this regard.

Legal rights of property owners and the impact on property values

From what I have read, property values drop as soon as unconventional gas projects enter an area. As previously stated; I believe this issue has the potential to do serious damage to the community fabric.

Any implications for local and regional development, investment and jobs;

There would be some jobs created in gas fields. I would suggest the risks this industry poses to our natural environment, agriculture and its associated industries, and our tourism industry would mitigate any benefit. We would be better to invest in clean renewables and create employment in a more sustainable manner.

An ability to provide a competitive source of energy and non energy inputs for Victorian industries;

Renewable energy is an obvious alternative as an energy source. Renewable energy infrastructure does not have the potential to contaminate our water, soil, and air. It does not have a finite lifespan nor does it disrupt our agricultural land.

With regard to regulatory safeguards; monitoring and establishing performance standards for **environmental and health risks, including water quality, air quality, chemical use, waste disposal, land contamination and geotechnical stability**; this list of potential problems just highlights the risks involved in this industry. Unconventional gas companies do not have a good record in this regard and if it is incumbent on our community to provide and monitor these safeguards, I would suggest the industry is unacceptable. This is an industry that can have a number of wells and associated services on a site. It will be creating 'produced 'water, possibly needing desalination. It will require substantial earth works and settling ponds, creating mud, dust and erosion. There will be pumping, digging and flaring 24/7. It has the potential severely degrade our farmland and contaminate our food chain.

I do not feel confident that this industry can, and will be adequately monitored and controlled.

We do not need this. We do not want it. There are alternatives.

We care a lot about our environment.

Thank you for this opportunity to present our opinion

Colin and Lorraine Brimblecombe

