

My name is Simon Kennedy. My family and I live in Longford, Victoria, one of the areas targeted by unconventional gas companies. We run a wholesale nursery family business from our home and would like to stay as long as we can, but with the threat of CSG around the corner, many people are wondering whether it is time to leave before the properties in the area lose their value due to proximity to unconventional gas wells. It seems incredible that any government would seek to compromise the fine agricultural area of Gippsland for the sake of some gas. The vast majority of people in this region do not want unconventional gas production to occur and it would behoove the political class to listen.

Terms of Reference:

(1) While unconventional gas reserves may be plentiful in Victoria, I believe risks associated with the extraction of this gas to be too extreme to be allowed in this state.

(2) With Gippsland being a major contributor to the economy primarily through agriculture, it would seem prudent to not place any undue risks to it's productivity. If we look towards the future, we will see increased pressures on food production (due to population booms, expanding markets and land that has historically produced food becoming more marginal as global warming lets it's presence becoming more keenly felt), we should be doing all we can as a nation, to improve and increase certainty of supply of food rather than putting any of it at risk.

Onto human health concerns; there has yet to be a conclusive, fully independent report that endorses CSG and other unconventional gas extraction methods as being safe for residents that live near these wells and their associated evaporation ponds. With reports of children bleeding from the ears and nose up in Queensland, it presents a picture that is bleak and full of uncertainty for those residents surrounded by these gas fields. I was looking to move to Queensland with my family, but could not commit due to the risks we would face living there. It seems that mining is taking over to the detriment of almost all residents. The biggest winners are the mining groups, those individuals that work for the mining groups and the State and Federal governments via royalties.

Gas prices will be increased dramatically due to the export market (we have so much gas, we need to sell it overseas!) and the economists irrational notion that Australian's should pay top dollar for a product that used to be relatively cheap. We don't need more gas - we need more renewables.

(3) a) Co-existence between mining and agriculture, mining and residents can be achieved so long as the residents and the farmers make massive compromises for their earning potential and health concerns. Mining is the only winner in this relationship. The small amount of money negotiated with the farmers does not seem to compensate them enough for disrupting paddocks with the network of tracks that are installed when CSG drilling is allowed.

Exports may be negatively affected due to the tarnishing of that Gippsland brand. For example, some of the watermelons that come out of Chinchilla in Queensland have been tested and found to contain contaminants with the most likely cause pointing to the pollution of the water from the unconventional gas mining enterprises. So as a result, I now check to make sure the watermelon I purchase is not from Chinchilla.

(b) Property values will be reduced, as mining takes its toll on the land, and not just on the property where the drills are placed, but in the surrounding properties too. Who wants to live near a mine? Is living in un-spoilt farmland not a better prospect?

(c) It is most likely that local and regional development will increase with the introduction of unconventional gas mining, including investment and jobs; but jobs for who? Fly in – fly out personnel? Even if local people are employed and development occurs, when the mining leaves (when the gas runs out) the community will have a great distance to fall, as seen recently in Queensland. It is similar to giving a person with a broken leg a crutch, then taking it away when they least expect it, or when they can least afford it. Building communities up, just to tear them down again.

(4) a+b) While unconventional gas *could* contribute to Victoria's energy mix, the footprint it leaves behind should be considered. Ironically, gas is becoming increasingly uncompetitive purely *because* of CSG and the glut of gas its activities have produced. With plans to send the gas offshore to places like Japan, whose price is 4 times the amount that we pay per gigajoule here. So now Australia will have to pay global prices which will see our gas bills go up by at least 4 times the current rate as we are to experience globalised prices.

c) Carbon dioxide emissions, while lower than that of coal, it is yet another source that is contributing to global warming. All efforts should be made to reduce this footprint rather than enlarge it. Gas is being touted as the bridge between renewables and coal, and maybe it is, but gas at the expense of agriculture? Not a wise idea.

(5) This term of reference reeks of a forgone conclusion that this industry is coming no matter what we say or do.

Two subjects, which should be mentioned, are seismology and hydrology, and what they have in common is that they are not fully understood. The mapping available is inadequate to obtain flawless data, which will, inevitably, lead to flawed interpretations of the aquifers and the rock structure around the proposed gas well sites. Cracks do not have to be big to allow gas to travel, and once it travels to the aquifer, it is damaged forever. Again the risks are just too great. An example is found at Mt Disappointment (Victoria) and the activities of L'air Liquide Pty. Ltd. In their pursuit of CO₂, the fracking that occurred there allowed the gas to find new unpredictable ways to the surface despite doing comprehensive seismology tests. The result was CO₂ escaping into the atmosphere as mitigating the problem failed. We seem to encourage investment over legitimate safety concerns, as I'm sure will be the case here, with the CSG industry. I feel like I am wasting my time writing this, as the decision has most likely already been made by those who shouldn't have the authority to do so. If this industry is allowed to proceed, and then predictably, something goes wrong (water contamination most likely) I would like to see the politicians and mining bosses be tried in the courts for their role they played in bringing disaster to Victoria. They must be held accountable.

Self-regulation by the mining industry is a currently unacceptable situation. To finance a necessary and independent regulator who should have thorough oversight at every step of the way, with every well sunk. As mining and petroleum extractors across Australia are really left to their own devices, they

are prone to exaggerate their ability to comply with all of their contractual agreements. My family and I live in Longford, 5km south of the Longford ESSO gas facility, and we have had continual problems relating to odour, noise and health related issues stemming from their emissions. Despite numerous complaints to the EPA, nothing gets solved; I get no feed back and have absolutely no confidence in the EPA to “protect our environment”. This self-reporting policy in place around Australia for these intensely polluting companies is an absolute disgrace and should have never been allowed to go ahead. Compliance officers should be present at all times at all of these companies to ensure the public is not unduly affected.