

Parliamentary enquiry into the unconventional gas industry  
Keir Delaney, Secretary,  
Environment & Planning Committee Parliament House, Spring Street,  
Melbourne VIC 3002

Debbie McIntyre  
[REDACTED]

5<sup>th</sup> July 2015

Dear Enquiry,

My name is Debbie McIntyre. I live in Birregurra, on the northern end of the Otway foothills, and have lived in this region for over 20 years. I work as an Integration Aide in at a secondary school in Colac.

I request that the Victorian State government ban the use of the unconventional gas industry and its associated activities including exploration and mining for coal seam gas, shale gas, tight gas and any other form of onshore gas mining. At the very least, I ask that the government extend the moratorium for a further 5 years.

I became aware of the unconventional gas industry approximately 18 months ago. I was horrified and stunned at what was going on in Queensland. Since then I have spent a bit of time researching about this industry in Queensland, and around the world. I consider myself a reasonable person who values our natural environment; the right to fresh air, clean water; freedom, autonomy and authority over ones domain; along with the responsibility to each other as individuals and corporate citizens.

As I educated myself about this industry I realized that I could not stand idle while this beautiful state was at risk of being industrialized on an outstanding scale. I found out about the Lock the Gate movement and along with other residents in Birregurra, surveyed our community and that of neighbouring Warncoort. 95.6% of the residents responded saying that they wanted to keep their land and road gas field free. It is clear that this industry has NO social support whatsoever in this area.

I cannot imagine having to live in the circumstances where gas drill pads could be dotted all over the beautiful landscape here, along with all the associated infrastructure of roads, trucks, gas releasing and burning off at the wells, noise, air, water pollution and the toxic wastewater. I find it hard to fathom that the government would consider allowing an industry to use the millions of gegalitres of water to extract this gas, in a country where water is a precious and sometimes scarce commodity. I object to how the government has sold the mining licenses to the multinational corporations with little regard

for the rights of farmers and landowners, and certainly without any care for their livelihoods and businesses.

I believe the Victorian State government has a responsibility to protect the land that it is governing and care for the health of its citizens. To allow this industry to go ahead here represents a serious breach of a duty of care. With the recent landmark case where the Dutch court ruled that the Dutch government had knowingly contributed to global warming while doing nothing about it.

“Their legal arguments rested on axioms forbidding states from polluting to the extent that they damage other states, and the EU’s ‘precautionary principle’ which prohibits actions that carry unknown but potentially severe risks.” Guardian June 25 2015 (1)

As a previous city dweller who moved out to the country for the lifestyle that it offers, industrialisation of the landscape is of real concern for me. Below is an aerial photo of the landscape in Tara Queensland. I did not move to the country to live in an industrialised landscape such as this. Also, I don’t think this is going to be a great look on the pamphlet advertising the pristine Otways as a tourist destination. Nor do the thousands of people who have made the ‘tree change’ want to live in an industrial area. The 61 Victorian gasfield free declared communities have made this clearly known.



My further, and just as serious, concerns include the following -

Water –

The need for massive amounts of water for this industry to function. The lack of research of long-term effects of fracking on the the water table.

Contaminated toxic wastewater –

Water that is unable to be treated in its gigitalitres. What to do with it? Unable to trust industry with responsible disposable of this - eg Newcastle sewerage incident (2)

Risk to agricultural industry -

In regard to toxins being released into the atmosphere through the water, air and then into the soil and then these substances finding their way into our meat, fruit and vegetables.

The risk to the economic benefits of export industry is also an issue here. The Tasmanian government clearly understood this issue when it recently made its decision to extend the moratorium.

"Tasmanian Primary Industries Minister Jeremy Rockliff, who declared a one-year fracking moratorium in March 2014, considered 155 submissions on the subject. Mr Rockliff said there was uncertainty around fracking, and his decision would "protect Tasmania's reputation for producing fresh, premium and safe produce". (3)

The health and wellbeing of rural and farming communities –

Farmers in Victoria manage their land; they look out for one another and know that what one farmer does on one property will most likely have some kind of impact on the farms close by. This large scale industry has taken farmers in Queensland by surprise and stealth, pitting them against one another, creating unnecessary distress and angst in the communities.

Finally,

Below is a list of countries that have banned fracking. All have done for various reasons, which the Victorian government will no doubt to take into account.

Wales – February 2015

Northern Ireland - July 2014

France – 2011

Bulgaria – 2012

Spain – 2014

Austria – 2014

Italy – 2014

Please do not ignore the above issues when making your decision. While the short-term financial benefits to the state government may be tempting, the long-term negative impacts (and their associated costs) will far outweigh them.

Thankyou for taking the time to consider my submission. I will be happy to provide any further thought and comment on its content.

Yours sincerely

Debbie McIntyre

References:

(1) <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jun/24/dutch-government-ordered-cut-carbon-emissions-landmark-ruling>

(2) <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-19/company-fined-for-dumping-csg-fracking-water-from-agl-site-in-n/5978776>

(3) <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-02-26/fracking-banned-for-five-years-by-tasmanian-government/6265378>