

## Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Unconventional Gas

To the Environment and Planning Committee,  
6 July 2015

We have a numbers of concerns about the impact of allowing exploration and production of unconventional gas in Victoria on the physical environment and health of humans and other species.

### Our Shared Environment

Our property is at [REDACTED]  
The environment around Bellbrae is a great example of Australian bush and deserves to be preserved both now and for future generations. As we learn more about the negative impacts fossil fuels are having on climate change it seems that allowing such industries (in this area or others) licence to operate is at odds with ensuring a healthy environment



Our 15 acre block is inhabited by a large number of native animals and birds. We have allocated it as a 'Land for Wildlife' area, except for a small orchard, and this fruit is primarily consumed by the birds.

In addition we co-own, another 50 acres with four neighbours and are currently in the process of developing a covenant for this land (with Trust for Nature<sup>1</sup>) to preserve the biodiversity in our area.

There are numerous other land owners and farmers making the same decisions as us to do what they can to preserve and sustain the environment on which we depend. People in our community understand the importance of caring for the land and a large body of evidence to date shows that unconventional gas mining is damaging to both the environment and those who live on it.

### Our Concerns and Available Evidence

As this committee knows there is a large amount of evidence citing the negative consequences from unconventional gas production over years in the US and more recently in NSW and Queensland.

Based on this research we consider the types of chemicals being used and their impact are a huge concern. Specifically the US House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce 2011 reported that:

*Between 2005 and 2009, the oil and gas service companies used hydraulic fracturing products containing 29 chemicals that are (1) known or possible carcinogens, (2) regulated under the Safe Water Drinking Act for their risks to human health, or (3) listed as hazardous air pollutants under the Clean Air Act. These 29 chemicals were components of more than 650 different products used in hydraulic fracturing<sup>2</sup>;*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.trustfornature.org.au/>

<sup>2</sup> Parliament of Victoria Research Paper. Unconventional Gas: Coal Seam Gas, Shale Gas and Tight Gas, Chapter 6  
<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/publications/research-papers/8927-unconventional-gas-coal-seam-gas-shale-gas-and-tight-gas>

As worrying, is that, this US committee found that companies using these chemicals had a lack of knowledge about the composition of the products they were using. How can it be that companies claim these products are safe if they do not know what is in them?

*In many instances, the oil and gas service companies were unable to provide the Committee with a complete chemical makeup of the hydraulic fracturing fluids they used ...in most cases the companies stated that they did not have access to proprietary information about products they purchased "off the shelf" from chemical suppliers. In these cases, the companies are injecting fluids containing chemicals that they themselves cannot identify.<sup>3</sup>*

This evidence is both frightening and an excellent example of the dangers of allowing unconventional gas exploration and production to go ahead in Victoria.

In addition other concerns we have relating to unconventional gas mining are:

- Contamination of water resulting in undrinkable water for people, animals and birds;
- Uranium and asbestos have been found in groundwater as a result of leaks from fracking in New South Wales and Queensland;
- Reduction of water table levels through use of mega litres of water in the extraction process;
- Air borne pollutants that have been documented to cause short term health effects such include skin rashes, nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain and breathing difficulties as well as more serious health problems include reduced brain function, cancer in people of all ages, birth defects and developmental problems in growing children
- Contaminated land and food that will affect longer term food security, farmers' livelihoods and rural communities;
- Impact of the surf coast as being a place with clear water, air and food; and
- The tourism industry will be affected by unsightly gas fields, pollution and loss of reputation for fresh, clean
- The impact of methane gas released by unconventional gas mining processes (as it is up to 21 times as powerful a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide).

#### Conclusion

We have only touched on some of our concerns in this brief submission. In conclusion we would like to pose two questions to you the committee:

- **Why would you allow unconventional gas extraction in Victoria when we already know the serious dangers that this industry presents?**
- **What responsibility do we as citizens and you as decision makers have to preserve our environment for future generations?**

Thank you for taking the time on this important issue. If we can assist further please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours Sincerely

Jan Cossar and Guy Gilbert



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<sup>3</sup> Ibid