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8 July 2015

Keir Delaney
Secretary, Environment & Planning Committee
Legislative Council Parliament House
Spring Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3002

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To the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning

Inquiry into Unconventional Gas in Victoria

The Golden Plains Shire Council welcomes the opportunity to provide the Committee with a submission to help inform the above mentioned inquiry. As a large rural municipality with a significant agricultural base and some of the most rapid development and growth within regional Victoria, this inquiry is of significant interest to Council.

In placing this submission Council would like to extend its support to the Municipal Association of Victoria and its own submission which delves into the issue in a greater extent than our own. As the statutory peak body for local government in Victoria, the MAV works to represent and advance the interests of all Victorian councils, and its submission is representative of the view held by Council.

It is important to note that the central vision of Council is to offer to its rate payers the lifestyle and opportunities that foster social, economic and environmental wellbeing through sustainable development. Of particular importance to achieving this vision is retaining and supporting the substantial agricultural industry which in turn support the municipality as a whole. This is key to Councils objections to the occurrence of unconventional gas exploration and extraction within its municipality.

To this date it is Council's belief that it has not been adequately demonstrated that:

- associated impacts are not detrimental to environmental health;
- there is an appropriate regulatory framework in place to ensure protection of the natural environment;
- an appropriate level of community support is evident; and
- local communities, rural industries and private property rights are adequately addressed.

The negative aspects of unconventional gas exploration and extraction have been well documented and are of particular concern to large agricultural based communities. Specifically Council believes that more work is required to address the issues regarding adverse environmental impacts on water supply and quality, the risk of contamination of groundwater and aquifers, loss of access to groundwater for agricultural purposes, and the risk of land and air contamination.

In addition to the above Council has concerns about the apparent inadequate controls surrounding landowners' rights as opposed to industry land access rights. There is also significant potential that any future unconventional gas exploration and extraction within the municipality will have a substantial negative impact on property values through such issues as land rehabilitation and long term agricultural viability.

Thank you for your consideration into these matters. Council looks forward to the development of the committees report on the exploration, extraction, production and rehabilitation for onshore unconventional gas in Victoria.



Rod Nicholls
Chief Executive Officer