

**Submission to: The Victorian Environment and
Planning Committee Inquiry into
exploration, extraction, production and
rehabilitation for onshore
unconventional gas**

By: Andrew Laird

1. My family has owned property in Anglesea on Victoria's iconic Surf Coast since the mid-1950's and I am extremely concerned about the risks that unconventional gas (**UCG**) exploration and development poses to both the Surf Coast region and the State.

2. I have helped prepare a reasonably detailed written submission by Anglesea based community group Surf Coast Air Action Inc. (**SCAA**), which I am involved with. I adopt the SCAA submission and restrict my personal submission to making some key points.

3. The critical point that I wish to make is that (despite assertions to the contrary by fossil fuel proponents) UCG exploration and development poses a number of serious and unacceptable known and unknown risks. This is hardly surprising in circumstances where chemical mixtures are being injected into often poorly understood geology and hydrogeology at high pressure to fracture the earth in order to release trapped gas.

4. The issues that I am particularly concerned about include:
 - a. The disconnect between the relatively short term benefits that UCG may bring to a narrow section of the community vis a vis the long term damage that it will do;

 - b. Short and long term risks to groundwater generally and the Anglesea bore field (that supplies drinking water to Greater Geelong) in

particular;

- c. Air pollution, both in terms of its impact on human health and in terms of exacerbating climate change;
 - d. Physical damage to the Surf Coast that would inevitably be caused by the industrialisation that UCG would bring;
 - e. Economic damage to the critically important tourism industry (in particular) and to agriculture on the Surf Coast;
 - f. The fact that developing (yet more) fossil fuels will inevitably slow the much needed move to clean renewable energy; and
 - g. Damage to communities caused by an industry that has no social license to operate on the Surf Coast (or elsewhere) and which will never be accepted by large numbers of people.
5. I ask the Committee to note that there is very strong local opposition to UCG on the Surf Coast. This is illustrated by the fact that both local Federal Member for Corangamite Sarah Henderson MP and Surf Coast Shire Council (as well as numerous community groups) oppose UCG.
6. It is also relevant that Lakes Oil (the holder of the exploration license over the Surf Coast) has stated on Twitter that it has no activities planned for the Surf Coast and that it is a low priority area (see tweet reproduced below). In circumstances where a permanent UCG exploration and development ban on the Surf Coast would apparently cause no difficulty to the exploration permit holder a permanent ban is clearly appropriate in view of the risks summarised in paragraph 4.

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Lakes Oil pioneers 'natural tight gas' whilst creating a successful exploration company onshore. We are not involved in CSG.

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LakesOil @LakesOil · Jul 6

Surf Coast VIC no activities planned, low priority area. [@SCAA3230](#)

[Details](#)

7. Finally I note that the endorsed ALP candidate for Corangamite Libby Coker has announced that she will be hosting a national Renewable Energy Summit in September this year. Clean renewable energy (and the associated investment and jobs bonanza that it will bring) represents the future for the Surf Coast and elsewhere. This is what the Victorian Government should be focusing on, not a transient fossil fuel industry that may cause grave long-term damage to our state.

8. I submit that there is a very strong case for a permanent ban on UCG exploration and development throughout Victoria. At a minimum however UCG exploration and development should on any reasonable view be banned permanently in sensitive areas such as the Surf Coast.

9. If the Committee would be assisted by amplification or clarification of these written submissions please let me know.

9 July 2015

Andrew Laird