

Inquiry into Unconventional Gas in Victoria

Mrs Leigh Coggins

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July 7th 2015

I would like to make this submission into the State Governments Inquiry into Unconventional Gas.

With my husband I have been farming here for the past 20 years. I have two 7th generation Grandson's on farms and am not prepared to stand by and watch the unconventional gas mining industry, with inadequate monitoring & regulation, ruin their future and ours.

For this reason and the following I am opposed to unconventional gas mining in Victoria.

I believe that unconventional gas mining puts our food, water & air at risk. We want strong communities and a safe climate.

Our community group Gas Field Free South West Victoria has voiced its opposition to Unconventional Gas Mining with a survey taken and 96% of its members voted NO to Unconventional Gas Mining.

Our Shire, the Shire of Southern Grampians, has declared that it is opposed to unconventional gas mining by declaring itself Gas Field Free.

At the VFF conference on June 26th 2015, members voted strongly recognising that there is increasing evidence of negative impacts on Agriculture & water supplies with Unconventional Gas Mining both within Australia & around the world. They voted to support a 5 year moratorium.

Our community is very concerned and wants to be heard and noticed.

The process of hydraulic fracturing involves the pressurised injection of fluids, sand & chemicals into rock to fracture & release gas.

The mining companies use huge numbers of chemicals in the fracking process:

344 chemicals are used for drilling, 75% are known to cause skin & eye irritations.

20-30% can cause reproductive mutations or cancerous complications.

Prolonged exposure to BTEX chemicals affect kidneys, liver & blood, such as Leukaemia

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A single well requires millions of gallons of water and tons of sand in the fracking process. With resultant high levels of silicon in the air the disease silicosis can occur with increasing risk of lung cancer, end stage renal disease, chronic bronchitis & emphysema. (Kenneth Rosenman, Clinical Pulmonary Medicine Journal, USA)

Thus there is growing evidence around the world that Fracking is bad for Health and the Environment. In Australia the examples of diseases in the Queensland township of Tara promoted the making of the movie Frackman, by Josh Fox. This is a chilling account of what is actually happening in Australia now.

It is a fallacy to believe that coexistence of unconventional gas mining and agriculture is possible here.

Traditionally farming land has been passed from one generation to the other over hundreds of years. Gas extraction will exist for a period of 5 to 20 years and then the landscape will be left scared and useless. Over this period our farmland will be dotted with huge pads of concrete, 500-750 metres apart, drill rigs on top working 24 hours a day, and all joined by pipes and roadways. There may be thousands of wells in a district venting and flaring 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In summer the risk of bushfires would be a serious concern. A strong south wind would carry polluted air over Hamilton. People would not want or be able to live there.

I have read that there are an estimated 40,000 wells planned in Australia, which would draw 300 gigalitres (300 billion litres of water) each year. This would also leave 31 million tonnes of salt as a bi product, to be dealt with over a 30 year period.

With climate change we need to stop burning fossil fuels. Further exploration and gas mining is nonsensical. The methane released in the mining process is a potent greenhouse gas, many times the global impact of carbon dioxide.

We have access to sufficient gas supplies, Bass Strait & the Canning Basin, to help transition to renewable energy sources. The unconventional gas that will be mined is for export. This will not be an affordable energy source for domestic consumers & locally gas prices will increase as a result. Land prices will not.

Do we actually need to be mining this gas and ruining prime agricultural land and changing our lives forever?

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