

To the Environment and Planning Committee,

My name is Joel Gross and I was born and raised on a farm in the Otways near Apollo Bay. I live and work on this family farm which produces livestock for the meat market, is an agroforestry farm and produces fruit and vegetables. I have travelled to areas ravaged by unconventional gas exploitation and have heard and seen first hand the destruction this industry causes to farmers, communities, the environment and the existing economy of entire regions. I am deeply concerned about unconventional gas mining due to the potential contamination of water and air which will impact not only the agricultural prospects in the region but will also harm the environment and health of humans, livestock and wildlife in the area. Furthermore, the impact such an industry will have on the local economy, both tourism and agriculture, is of great concern.

I am entirely opposed to ANY exploitation of unconventional gas (including coal seam, shale, tight and underground coal gasification) and recommend an absolute and permanent ban on unconventional gas (mining, drilling etc.). Even if the government chooses to ignore the extensive evidence proving the dangers of unconventional gas exploitation and the voices of affected communities in Queensland and overseas, a permanent ban is still the right course of action. Given that it has never been shown that unconventional gas exploitation can be undertaken without negative impacts on health, food, water, green house gas emissions, the environment and local communities, I strongly urge the government to take the precautionary principle and ban hydraulic fracturing and the exploitation of unconventional gas in Victoria. Speaking with people in the Otways region, there is a broad consensus that an unconventional gas industry is not welcome. Farmers, business owners, families and the community at large have made it clear that, should the moratorium be lifted, they will actively oppose such an industry by any means necessary.

The “prospectivity” of the geology in Victoria for unconventional gas, is completely irrelevant. The industrialisation of rural areas brought about by unconventional gas activities, and the air and water pollution it brings with it, would significantly damage the Victorian landscape whilst providing little or no economic or social benefits. In fact, an unconventional gas industry in Victoria is likely to have a severely detrimental impact on the environment, land productivity and the health of the public. A study done by McCarron in the Tara gasfields of Queensland, shows extensive and shocking negative impacts on the health of residents who have had the unconventional gas industry forced upon them. Furthermore, many farmers in that region had their wells and bores contaminated so severely that they could be set on fire. Given Victoria is far more densely populated, we are likely to be far more heavily impacted by unconventional gas mining and processing than those in Queensland.

By allowing the exploitation of unconventional gas we are in effect committing to at least another twenty years of reliance on fossil fuels for energy. This is absolutely unacceptable and given the urgency to reduce emissions we should be phasing out all fossil fuel production and investing in real renewable energy such as wind and solar. The industry tries to sell unconventional gas as a source of “clean” energy, claiming that it contributes less green house gas emissions than coal. This has been proven to be false. During the unconventional gas drilling process 3.6 - 7.9% per cent of the total methane extracted leaks into the atmosphere. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has reported that methane, which makes up 95 percent of natural gas, is actually 34 times more potent than  $\text{CO}_2$  over 100 years and 86 times more potent than  $\text{CO}_2$  over 20 years. This puts unconventional gas on par with brown coal in terms of harmful emissions.

Water is a precious resource which we rely upon to survive. A single fracturing job requires between 4 – 30 million litres of water, roughly 130 – 1100 truckloads. Unconventional gas needs 100 – 10000 times more water than conventional gas operations. Only 10 – 40% of the water and chemicals

injected underground to frack gas wells ever returns to the surface. The rest is permanently removed from the water cycle. The Federal Government 'Water Group' estimates that 5400 billion litres of water could be used in unconventional gas extraction each year. That is almost three times the 1872 billion litres used by all the households in Australia each year combined. Furthermore, the depletion of aquifers is a well known and common consequence of unconventional gas exploitation.

Unconventional gas can simply not coexist with existing land and water uses. Agricultural industry can not survive when water is severely contaminated. Furthermore, tourism is not compatible with industrialisation. Our region is a tourist attraction because of its largely untouched natural areas. If an unconventional gas industry is allowed to go ahead, these areas will be pock marked with wells, roads will be full of trucks carrying water and chemicals, and towns will be awash with fly-in-fly-out workers. An unconventional gas industry will mark the end of tourism in SW Victoria.

Please prioritise public health, water, existing industry and the environment over the interests of the unconventional gas industry. We must focus on protecting the future of our children rather than lining the pockets of gas companies. I urge the committee to recommend an immediate, permanent and unequivocal ban on unconventional gas in all its forms.

Sincerely,

Joel Gross