

[REDACTED]

From: Inquiry into Unconventional Gas POV eSubmission Form
<cso@parliament.vic.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 10 July 2015 12:31 AM
To: EPC
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into Unconventional Gas in Victoria.

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Unconventional Gas in Victoria.

Mr Peter Callender
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SUBMISSION CONTENT:

--

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your time in attending to this issue, which we believe is of significant importance to the future of Victoria.

As you will have no doubt learnt already, the unconventional gas industry is unlike any other - evidenced simply in the wide array of people, from all walks of life, who have united across the country to express their opposition to it. Of course there are those in favour, and this is not to dispute that in any way, it's simply that it's very rare to see such a diverse and widespread opposition to an industry or issue (we're certainly not used to seeing greens and farmers on the same side!).

On a personal note, my parents work a small beef farm in rural NSW. The thought of unconventional gas wells being sunk (whether fracking would be involved or not) anywhere near the property sends absolute shudders through our entire family - and the prospect of mining companies coming on to the land against the will of the landholder would invoke a much stronger reaction, believe you me! They have worked so hard for what they have, and even the remotest possibility of industrialisation, land value depreciation, noise and air pollution, or the big one - water pollution - are simply unacceptable.

To briefly address some of the other terms of reference.

(2) The list of risks here is extensive and well-known, no doubt you will now be well aware of them. I would only highlight a couple of points. Even if all of the gas wells were able to operate safely, the simple industrialisation of the land is an enormous factor that has the potential to destroy the fabric of agricultural communities. These gasfields are unlike previous fossil fuel exploration. It is not one large coal mine, or one large gas deposit. It requires many, many wells over a significant stretch of land, all with interconnecting roads, pipelines, compressor stations etc.

This leads to the other enormous factor, to which the industry seemingly has no answer - and that is what to do with the produced water. Holding ponds are no answer. We cannot simply bring up dangerous heavy metals and allow them to evaporate into the air we breathe, or spray them on our roads, or let them wash away into our waterways. This is the furthest thing away from the precautionary principle imaginable.

3(C) Our business is to help people to find jobs. We specialise in jobs in the not-for-profit sector, and now have more than 170,000 people visiting our website every month - nearly half of them from Victoria. When the gas industry says they will bring jobs to the economy, we say look at the 2015 Environmental Scan from the Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council (http://www.cshisc.com.au/media/373200/EScan_2015_SUMMARY.pdf). Literally hundreds of thousands of jobs are being created over the next few years in community services and health, whereas the gas industry can offer us how many? A few hundred? Maybe a thousand? And how long will they last for? Our regional areas are crying out for more community services, not industries that have the potential to further divide and depress communities. Already we are seeing what happens when the unconventional gas industry leaves towns in Queensland (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-06-27/coal-seam-gas-construction-boom-ends-in-qld/6575922>), and they've only just begun. This is a very, very short-term view of prosperity for Victoria.

4(B) Very quickly on the price of gas, no doubt other submissions will have highlighted that this is an utter furphy portrayed by industry. We are absolutely beholden to the gas price we will start to pay as a result of Australia starting to export gas to Asia. The amount of unconventional gas proposed to be produced in Victoria is an absolute drop in the ocean, and it is hard to see how this will make a difference to the price of gas. If the government's true priority was to suppress the price of gas, they would be looking at limiting exports or at a gas reserve for our country's people and industries. See: <http://www.reserveourgas.com.au/>

Finally, I would like to communicate that it is very disappointing to see no inclusion of or even reference to community approval in the terms of reference. This is clearly an issue that does not affect just one landholder, but an entire area. After all, these are companies who plan to drill horizontally for kilometres. From what we have heard from our community, and from the organisations we work with, there is at the minimum a high level of controversy, and at the highest end, very strong opposition to this issue and the industry pushing it. To say that there is a social license for this industry to go ahead would be incredibly bold, and whilst not as quantifiable as carbon emissions, this should not mean that it is any less valid or important. Communities have clearly been raising their voices and fighting hard to express their concern over this industry. To allow the industry to proceed would be an enormous insult to these people, and to the democracy they are doing their everything to participate in.

The only practical way forward we can see is for a permanent ban on the industry, to give certainty to all involved and allow people to get on with their lives, and for government to map out the best way for Victoria to move forward. Ongoing uncertainty around this industry will only mean more of the same division, tension and unrest in rural communities across the state.

Yours sincerely,
Peter Callender

--

File1:

File2:

File3: