

Submission to The Inquiry into Unconventional Gas in Victoria.
From: The Board of The South Gippsland Landcare Network.

South Gippsland Landcare Network Statement of Purpose

South Gippsland Landcare Network, through community action, helps to preserve, protect and enhance the environment of South Gippsland by working with government agencies and local businesses to achieve natural resource management outcomes

The South Gippsland Landcare Network (SGLN) was formed in 1995 and today is made up of 18 groups and over 800 families who manage and farm the land.

The Network area covers 270,000 ha and is bordered by the Strzelecki Ranges to the north and the Bass Strait to the south. The south-western half of the catchment is part of the Gippsland Plains bioregion, characterized by lowland coastal and alluvial plains with gentle undulating terrain which rises to meet the Strzelecki Ranges to the north.

Thanks to its high rainfall and productive soils, the South Gippsland area is an important dry-land agricultural region, with strong dairy and beef industries. The regional townships of Leongatha, Meeniyan, Poowong, Foster, Mirboo North and Korumburra are located in the Network.

The area also has high environmental value with large patches of coastal park, remnant vegetation and several significant waterways such as the Bass, Tarwin and Franklin Rivers. These rivers contribute to several important wetlands including Anderson Inlet and the RAMSAR protected Westernport Bay and Corner Inlet.

The South Gippsland Landcare Network believes that the risks to the environment, land productivity and public health from coal seam gas extraction are inappropriate due to the high environmental and agricultural value of our land. It is also in contradiction of our statement of purpose.

We do not believe that on shore gas activities can coexist with existing land and water uses due to the extreme invasiveness of this industry.

Examples of this are the introduction of roads to well heads and associated dust and pollution from traffic, the laying of pipes to each well head, the constant noise from the pumping stations together with the noise and pollution from flaring off excess gas and the pollution of the air from fugitive gas emissions. Not only does this industry use huge amounts of water, but the waste water produced with its high salinity and fracking chemicals is an unacceptable risk to our agricultural production, which in turn affects domestic and export marketing opportunities.

The property owners have very few legal rights in relation to this industry apart from trespass which can be overturned by VCAT. Properties are always devalued in gas fields.

The implications for local and regional development, investment and jobs would be dire if this highly invasive and polluting industry came here given that agriculture and everything associated with it is the main employer in this region. The CSG industry employs specialist people (fly in and fly out) and it is mainly in the brief setting up stage and very few in the production stage, which is of very little help to the local economy.

The only protection for landowners in this region is a total ban on onshore gas extraction.