

Dear Committee Members,

I am a Bayside Council resident but having grown up in regional Australia I understand that an issue like unconventional gas is something that affects us all. My background is in nursing, community and public health however I am currently a stay at home mum concerned about how the use of unconventional gas will affect our future generations.

It is for this reason that my family assisted Councillor Jane Touzeau in her efforts to be elected in the recent Victorian election, as she was a voice in the city speaking out against unconventional gas mining in Victoria. Essentially fighting for our food and water supply!

I do not support any form of unconventional gas mining in Victoria (including CSG, tight gas, shale gas and underground coal gasification). I was devastated to hear that the moratorium could be lifted and strongly believe that there should be a permanent ban on unconventional gas mining in Victoria. This State should look to other Australian States and America to realise the devastation unconventional gas mining ravages on the environment and the community. Victoria has the potential to be a leader and extract itself from unconventional gas mining permanently to focus on sustainable industries such as renewables and support the farmers that support us, the Victorian community.

Without water there is no life. Everything is interconnected. It really is that simple. Why would we put our water sources at risk? The flow on effects would be devastating. We are so fortunate in Victoria to have access to a wide variety of nourishing food, one of the main reasons my family continues to live in Victoria! I used to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and food security was a common issue. And yet when you talk to non-Aboriginal people, they often haven't even heard of the term. However, unconventional gas mining will impact our water sources, our farmland and from there, the issue of food security arises for the whole community. What kind of leader is Victoria if they can't provide the basic human right of access to food? It is short-sighted to put the environment and our community at risk when there are other more sustainable options.

A number of important concerns relating to the environment and public health have been raised regarding onshore unconventional gas activities including respiratory health concerns, climate change impacts, drinking water contamination, soil contamination, community impacts such as increased vehicle traffic, road damage, noise, demand and stress on limited infrastructure on small communities etc. The New York State Department of Health: A Public Health Review of High Volume Hydraulic Fracturing for Shale Gas Development (December 2014) also states a valid and important point that there are “critical information gaps” regarding the risks. Victoria is a small and densely populated region in comparison to Queensland so the impacts felt in Queensland will only be amplified in a state like ours. The understanding that there is crucial information missing regarding the risks is alarming.

My family are in the process of starting an organic farm. There is just no way that onshore unconventional gas activities on our land is an option. We cannot possibly provide organic produce for the domestic market with mining activities taking place! The philosophies of organic farming and mining completely oppose each other. We would not be able to produce organic food for Australian buyers. The value of our land/organic farm would plummet. The aim of government to support jobs will only be contradicted by putting our jobs, and livelihood, at risk.

The process of onshore unconventional gas mining means that accessing this gas results in a high energy cost. And to think that the government plans to export a substantial amount of this gas is ludicrous. How exactly will this gas be able to provide a competitive source of energy to Victorians? And why are we not investing in renewables that would be a competitive source of energy for Victorians and reducing our reliance on gas instead? It is frequently in the news what other countries are able to do with regards to their efforts in renewables (e.g. Netherlands).

Apart from being better for the environment, it is also better for human health (e.g. respiratory issues). Why do we continue to believe that the industry has the appropriate safeguards in place to keep the environment and its inhabitants safe? Industry is often in

the news after it is exposed that they are putting the environment and the community at risk e.g. AGL's Gloucester operations. The presence of the industry alone will always pose a risk. Let's not take the risk of supporting an industry that does not support us, the people, and the land we live on.

Kind regards,

Nicole Merzliakov

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