

From: Gay Cornthwaite [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 10 July 2015 11:32 AM
To: EPC
Subject: Submission to the Vic. gov. Inquiry into Unconventional Gas

To: The UCG inquiry panel and all involved parties.

From: Ian and Gay Cornthwaite



We are the fourth generation of the Cornthwaite family to live and farm in the Allambee area of the Strzelecki Ranges in Gippsland, Victoria. We are members of the Allambee Community Landcare Group and the Australian Plants Society. Ian is also a member of the Allambee Fire Brigade and has an Associate Diploma of Applied Science (Amenity Horticulture).

About one hour's drive to the north-east are the massive, unrestorable open coal pits of the Latrobe Valley, including Morwell, Yallourn and Loy Yang. The Strzelecki Ranges are an oasis and a buffer between this destructive industry and Gippsland's southern coastline, including Wilson's Promontory. Whilst to the north lie the Great Dividing Range and the Mt Baw Baw snowfields. Our region is highly picturesque and is a very valuable environmental and human resource now and into the future for all local communities.

Our farm is [REDACTED] and includes a sheep and cattle raising operation and a 32 year old indigenous plant nursery. We also are in the final stages of completing a holiday retreat cottage aimed at providing accommodation for tourists and as an escape for city dwellers. To this end, for both environmental and livelihood reasons, we have conducted extensive revegetation projects on our property and are just about to install a network of walking trails. Our property is surrounded by a mix of animal and cut-flower farms, native bushland, forestry and tourism based industry such as the two local holiday camps, and a Food Orchard enterprise. Less than twenty kilometres away are the tourism hubs of Mirboo North, on the famed Grand Ridge Road, and Yarragon Village, just north of Mount Worth State Park. Nearby is the important potato farming region surrounding Thorpdale. Our local bushland harbours a wide range of animal species including: koalas, wallabies, Sugar Gliders, Ring Tail and Brush Tail possums, wombats, platypus, water rats, numerous small marsupials, bats, reptiles, Lyre Birds, Bower Birds, Black Cockatoos, Galahs, Gang Gang cockatoos, Powerful Owls and other owls, numerous parrots and a host of smaller birds and water birds. Indigenous plant-life is also rich and varied and in need of protection and enhancement.

The Strzelecki Ranges, and especially the Allambee - Mirboo North aspects, are hilly, relatively fertile with well-formed soils, rich farming land, important remnants of damp and wet forest and pockets of rainforest. Tarra-Bulga National Park, to the east, contains ancient Beech and Sassafras rainforest. Rainfall is relatively high - 100 to 150mm per annum - and the whole Strzeleckis region is thus an important catchment area for the creeks and rivers that flow to the sea and the Gippsland Lakes area.

WE THUS CANNOT POSSIBLY SUPPORT ANY FORMS OF UNCONVENTIONAL GAS MINING (UCG), INCLUDING: COAL SEAM GAS, TIGHT GAS, SHALE GAS UNDERGROUND GASIFICATION or any other forms of gas exploration and/or mining that has or may have an adverse effect on local natural and/or human controlled environments in the Strzelecki Ranges or any other sensitive regions. To this end we would not allow entry onto our farm to any unconventional gas mining operation, whether it be for exploration or any other mining related activity. Our farm gates will all be locked and we have joined the many other local residents in displaying Lock The Gate signs. We would also assist other local residents in protecting the properties they caretake from uninvited entry by mining companies or related organisations.

The risks presented by UCG, both actual and perceived, as evidenced by other regions experiencing this activity both in Australia and overseas are significant in terms of groundwater effects, environmental and aesthetics degradation, tourism appeal, property values, noise, pollution and road disruption, "green and clean" agricultural values, psychological stress and invasion of human (and other animal) rights. In addition, the long term effects of onshore gas extraction and chemicals used in cracking operations, gas emissions, water usage and storage are not sufficiently studied and understood to advocate environmental safety. Transport of the gas extracted on our narrow, often unsealed roads would also be disruptive and expensive.

It is also questionable whether there would be significant benefits to local employment in a local UCG industry; in fact the disruptive effects to local tourism and farming industries as well as property values may have a detrimental effect on local employment. Has this prospect been sufficiently studied?

Alternative energy sources, away from limited fossil fuel sources and the disruptive mining thereof, is the way of the future and unconventional gas mining does not fit this unavoidable fact.