

To the Government of the day.
From Rob & Sharon Rentsch, [REDACTED]

We have been farming at the above address for nearly 35 years and very fortunate to have been able to farm at Byaduk for the last 10 years.

We are staggered at the amazing soil and abundant supply of pristine water available to us for our stock and cropping enterprise at Byaduk. It is a farmers paradise.

We are horrified to learn that our water table could be poisoned by the gas escaping into it from onshore unconventional gas mining.

There have been numerous instances where this has happened despite 'best practice'. The case at Santos in NSW, where uranium at levels 20 times higher than safe drinking water guidelines allow is a typical case in point. One would say 'it was an accident' but when the public are being subjected to poisons like uranium there is NO ROOM FOR ACCIDENTS and this can only be secured by NOT MINING at all. The NSW chief scientist made it clear that even under 'best practice regulations, unconventional gas mining could contaminate groundwater and food products and could place human health at risk'.

WE THEREFORE BEG YOU NOT TO ALLOW UGM TO HAVE A PLACE ON OUR WONDERFUL SOIL.

Friendly Terms Of Reference for the Victorian enquiry for UG

- . (1) *the prospectivity of Victoria's geology for commercial sources of onshore unconventional gas;*

How much natural gas is already available to Victorians?

Do we need new gas fields for the Victorian market?

- . (2) *the environmental, land productivity and public health risks, risk mitigations and residual risks of onshore unconventional gas activities;*

What are the risks to water quality?

Why is there not full disclosure of all the chemicals used in fracking?

How is waste water disposed of?

What evidence is there of accidents/spills and flooding that inadvertently contaminates water sources.

What are the risks to water quantity?

Amount of water needed for each frack, for each well

Where will that water come from.

Will there be water shortages

Where will the waste water go?

Where is the contaminated water stored

What happens if the containment ponds are flooded and spill over

Evidence of water contamination and chemical spills from other states and overseas

Risks of air contaminants

Risks of methane emissions on local residents, mine workers, livestock

What are the risks to local agriculture – contaminants in the soil, air and water

What are the risks to livestock

HEALTH - virtually no health impact studies have been done in Australia -

what are the risks to public health from:

Water contamination

Air quality/contamination

Accidents – risks to mine workers, risks to residents

Exposure to chemicals – risks to mine workers, risks to residents

Psychological stress

Social stress

Childhood vulnerability to water and air pollutants

Fractured communities

What mechanisms are in place for risk mitigation

What regulatory bodies exist and how are they manned

How many people are employed to regulate and oversee the industry

How many times are water sources, where are they tested

What chemicals are tested for, and how are they tested.

How are the regulatory bodies overseen?

What power to those bodies have for restitution/compensation

What happens if a company liable for reparation ceases to exist/goes bankrupt/is taken over by another company/merges with another company?

What happens to the mine site when the well is decommissioned?

What provisions are made for site rehabilitation?

Who is responsible for ongoing gas leakage from a decommissioned well?

Who is responsible for the ultimately 100% of well casing failures/leakage

- . (3) the coexistence of onshore unconventional gas activities with existing land and water uses, including —
 - . (a) agricultural production and domestic and export market requirements;

Examples of agricultural land adversely affected by UG exploration and mining

What is the effect on organic farming licences.

- . (b) the legal rights of property owners and the impact on property values; and

Will landowners have the right to refuse admission to mining companies

Will landowners have the right to veto horizontal drilling under their land

Will landowner have the right to veto drilling within 2 km of their land (note that there is a legal 2 km exclusion zone around any wind turbine)

Examples of land and house prices adversely affected by mining

Examples of unsellable land because of gas wells and industry

Fractured communities leading to movement of residents and families away from mining areas and ultimate loss of farming communities

- . (c) any implications for local and regional development, investment and jobs;

Negative effects on local and regional development of other businesses.

Effects of mining on established industries such as tourism (holiday rental accommodation/cycling and walking routes/National Parks/state forests/restaurants and cafes/berry farms etc.)

Effects of mining on wineries and boutique food production

Effects of mining on local farming

Effects of mining on lifestyle farms

What is the evidence of new job opportunities for residents

Who is employed to engineer the drilling and the mines

Where will the unskilled labour workforce come from

Where will the skilled labour workforce come from

Will local people be offered permanent or contract jobs

What are the long term effects of a temporary increase, then abandonment of infrastructure and employment after the lifetime of the well (about 10 to 15 years)

- . (4) the ability of potential onshore unconventional gas resources contributing to the State's overall energy sources including —
 - . (a) an ability to provide a competitive source of energy and non energy inputs for Victorian industries;

What assurances are given that further gas mining will result in cheaper gas for domestic and industrial use.

What is the market – Victorian or overseas

What are the projected needs for gas in Victoria over the next 10, 20, 30 years.

- . (b) an affordable energy source for domestic consumers;
and

Why are current gas prices rising if we have a good supply of Australian gas

What is the role of long term contracts for Asian markets keeping domestic gas prices high.

If more gas is mined in Australia, what does that mean for domestic gas prices. High supply of gas in NSW has led to increased prices.

- . (c) carbon dioxide emissions from these sources;

Global warming and all the issues it entails

Fossil fuels should be left in the ground

Risk of stranded assets if falling gas demands over the next decade means less worldwide demand for gas.

Legislation/foreign government commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions imminent – Paris COP21 may change the state of play. The Pope’s encyclical iterates the point.

Risk of fugitive emissions from failed well casings, decommissioned mines

Gas industry is not a bridging fuel to a renewable energy economy

Methane and fugitive emissions are some of the worst contributors to climate change

(5) the resource knowledge requirements and policy and regulatory safeguards that would be necessary to enable exploration and development of onshore unconventional gas resources, including —

- . (a) further scientific work to inform the effective regulation of an onshore unconventional gas industry, including the role of industry and government, particularly in relation to rigorous monitoring and enforcement, and the effectiveness of impact mitigation responses; and

Guidelines unavailable at present.

Baseline surveys of chemical composition of ground and surface water and air quality have not been done.

Inefficient and inadequate regulation of wells and water. No disclosure of chemicals used in fracking, so obviously unable to test for them.

What standards are expected by the community

What standards are expected by the industry.

No matter how rigorous the monitoring and enforcement, accidents WILL happen.

Predictable failure rate of well casings.

Ability or lack of ability to enforce regulations – fines/suspension of operations/restitution

- . (b) performance standards for managing environmental and health risks, including water quality, air quality, chemical use, waste disposal, land contamination and geotechnical stability;

See above

Risks of seismic activity

(6) relevant domestic and international reviews and inquiries covering the management of risks for similar industries including, but not limited to, the Victorian Auditor- General Office's report *Unconventional Gas: Managing Risks and Impacts* (contingent upon this report being presented to Parliament) and other reports generated by the Victorian community and stakeholder engagement programs.

Community consultation process.

Fracking the Future by the Australia Institute.

New Brunswick enquiry – economic gains and adverse health outcomes

No comprehensive cost analysis of the industry have been undertaken, including the external costs of the industry such as long term health effects, fractured communities, loss of arable land, lowered property values etc.

No assessment of the gas needs of Victoria for domestic and commercial use in the future decades.

No assessment of the risks of the industry to the Victorian population, when gas is mined for overseas markets, and most of the profits from the industry go to offshore investors.

Thank you for your consideration,
Rob and Sharon Rentsch,

