

To the Environment and Planning Committee,

I am writing to you to lodge my objection to coal seam gas operations in Victoria. This industry has spread its tentacles throughout regional Victoria and threatens the long term quality of our underground water. Although the industry might claim that they do not pollute ground water, there is considerable evidence to contradict this. Furthermore, once contamination does occur, there is no easy way to remove it. Much of our groundwater is already contaminated by other industries, for example from poorly maintained petrol service stations. We need more widespread groundwater monitoring (and hydrologists) to manage these issues alone. Although the coal seam gas industry might claim not to contaminate ground water in the short term, we cannot be sure that this infrastructure will not pollute in years to come. Our ground water is precious, we need to protect it for the health of our ecosystems and future generations.

We don't need an unconventional gas industry in Victoria to supply energy. Unconventional gas is not a renewable source of energy - it is polluting, contributes to climate change, and is not required as a fuel to transition between fossil fuels and renewables. We can make a planned transition to 100% renewables in Victoria without the need for gas as a 'bridging' fuel, but we need to start investing in real renewables like solar and wind power now.

We don't need an unconventional gas industry in Victoria to provide employment. Supporting and growing our renewables industry will provide more jobs that are future-proofed and lead to greater long-term employment growth in Victoria. Growth in our renewables industry provides a valuable opportunity for re-skilling and redeploying workers who need help to transition from traditional energy production roles – there are now more people employed installing solar panels in Victoria than in coal generation.

Other jurisdictions like New York City and Ohio have already instituted permanent bans on coal seam gas, and Victoria should follow suit, as this is what the community wants.

Coal seam gas carries massive and proven risks for the environment and health. It threatens our environment, land productivity, agricultural industries, our water supply, our communities and public health, and the risks are far too great to be mitigated or outweighed by any benefits.

Victorian communities don't want unconventional gas. At least 30 communities have already declared themselves gasfield-free, and the number continues to grow. The Government needs to respect the wishes of Victorian communities.

Anna Murphy

