

To the Environment and Planning Committee,

As a citizen of Victoria, I am vehemently opposed to an unconventional gas industry in our state - as are significant numbers of people, in both rural and urban areas. Already some 30 communities have declared themselves frack-free, and that number is growing.

I was alarmed by the 2013 Four Corners program (<http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2013/04/01/3725150.htm>) investigating the unconventional gas industry in Queensland - not just for the lack of process given to fracking operations, but the evidence of serious environmental damage, the effects of which will last much longer than the benefits of extracting coal-seam gas. Coal-seam gas 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. Other jurisdictions, like New York City and Ohio, have instituted permanent bans on coal seam gas, and Victoria should follow suit rather than continuing to fall behind - in no small part because this is what the community wants.

As Naomi Klein has argued, coal seam gas is not a renewable source of energy; it, along with other greenwash solutions like 'clean coal', simply takes us "more slowly down the wrong path" in terms of climate change. I believe that Victoria can make a planned transition to 100% renewables without the need for gas as a 'bridging' fuel, but we need to start investing in real renewables like solar and wind power now.

Moreover, supporting and growing our renewables industry will provide more jobs - which, unlike jobs in polluting resources industries, are future-proofed - that will lead to greater long-term employment growth in the state. 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.

**Annie Toller**

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