

To the Environment and Planning Committee,

I have serious concerns regarding the potential expansion of Coal Seam Gas. Primarily is the speed at which the industry has been allowed to grow without proper research of, or controls around, the chemicals being pumped into the ground to release the gas. The potential of disastrous outcomes is unacceptable and the ramifications devastating. If these highly toxic chemicals, the composition of which we don't know as it's a trade secret, makes its way into the aquifer there is NO WAY TO REMOVE IT. This could potentially spell the end for massive areas of agriculture currently used to feed Australia. The risk is just too great.

Additionally, it is time for Australia to transition to renewable energy not increase fossil fuel production. With targeted funding into renewables, unconventional gas need not make up a part of our energy mix. 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.

Employment is vital to thriving communities. Supporting and growing our renewables industry will provide more jobs that are future-proofed and lead to greater long-term employment growth in Victoria than unconventional gas will. 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. Moreover, these areas have made the bans due to the negative effects of this type of industry on the environment and their communities. Rivers and creeks should flow not bubble with escaping gas.

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.

**Craig Mildwaters**

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