



*My name is Kirra Boulton and I am from Seaspray. I am lucky enough to live with my family on our beautiful Dairy farm. My family have farmed in Seaspray for the past 30 years, and we feel very privileged to live in such a beautiful part of Gippsland!*

*We are very lucky to live where we do. Our farm adjoins bush lands, runs to the ocean and has irrigation and dry pasture. We have been very fortunate to have reliable groundwater from the underground aquifer and water from Merrimans creek, for irrigation and stock water.*

*In 2013 we first learnt about unconventional gas as we realised that our farm adjoined that of Lakes Oil. We were shocked, devastated, and in disbelief. We could not believe or understand how this could be allowed to happen. Now we are extremely worried, worried about our irrigation water, our stock water and the fresh clean environment that we have enjoyed over the years, which may be threatened and taken from us by greedy mining companies, by people that don't even live here, let alone care or respect anyone or anything other than the dollars they plan to make.*

*I never thought that in my life I would be fighting for the right to be able to live and work on a farm in Gippsland in this country, and in this day and age. To have my neighbours threatening my livelihood, my health and my children and grandchildren's future on the land*

*.The neighbour's that threaten all of this are Lakes Oil who own an adjoining 1000 acres to us and plan to put 70 wells down. They will and have encouraged neighbouring landowners to allow them on their properties so as they can expand even more on their existing Wombat Field.*

*Down the road a little bit we have Ignite Energy in partners with Esso they have 9 wells at present on a local farmers property and this is just the beginning. These companies will just expand over Gippsland , they will go into production phase and before we know it there will be other companies doing the same as there are many mining licenses taken out throughout Gippsland already .*

*Politicians I have spoken to say this industry and is a long way off, if it ever happens. Well, at Seaspray it is already happening. I have witnessed the sneaky way that these mining companies operate, they just slither in and before anyone knows what they are about to do it is too late, they encourage farmers into thinking it will be good for them and once you have signed an agreement you can't change your mind even if they contaminate your water, your land, the air you breath it's too late.*

*I have seen the shoddy workmanship Lakes Oil have done above the ground with just 4 wells ,they couldn't do the job right then , how can they guarantee us it will be done safe and properly underground when above was a disgusting mess .*

*I have witnessed the horrible loud noise one well makes when it begins flaring the sound of a jet engine on the tarmac god help us when we have 70 or 100 or 1000s of wells*

*Even the latest Seismic study with the machine that sounds much like a post rammer going about the country side doing the study that gives them information of what's underground, very intimidating as you work with your cattle and the sound echoes in the distance.*

*They don't need to purchase or get access from all the neighbours as the drilling method goes horizontal anyway they can be under your property and there is nothing you can do about it, you won't even know .*

*If these companies have licenses to drill and they require water and extract water in the process how do they get access to the water, water that our farmers due to the current allocation moratorium are unable to access?*

*Another question I ask is who is going to be accountable for the contamination of my water and the lack of water when my farm cannot operate as an irrigation dairy farm and I cannot supply a guaranteed quality product.*

*Why do I feel so vulnerable up against these mining giants? There is no guarantee of satisfactory protection from our leaders in State or Federal government.*

*Is Gippsland going to be another mistake that our government inflicts on us and will we be hearing the words “sorry we got it wrong”. Mining and agriculture cannot coexist.*

*I am not a scientist I do not have a engineering degree but I do know that the most important asset we have in this country is clean water.*

*The risk of any contamination no matter how small to our water and environment is too risky. Our good clean food producing image in Gippsland cannot be put at risk .We have to stand up for our right to have clean air, water and soil.*

*87 % of Gippsland is currently under some form of mining license, if we let our leaders continue to sell us out to foreign companies, and destroy our lands and our beautiful country.*

*What will you say, to your grandchildren when they ask..... ”.why did you let it happen”?*

I have used as an introduction the transcript of a speech I made in 2013 when addressing another community under threat of unconventional gas.

Since that time we have had a moratorium put in place by the previous Government and the fulfilling of a promise in the form of the Inquiry by the current Government.

I have been part of a community that has been forced to put aside their previous lives in order to inform and educate themselves about the unconventional gas industry. I have found no evidence what so ever that our fears in 2013 were unwarranted.

In my role as a teacher at the Seaspray Primary School I have witnessed the fear my students experienced when Lakes Oil carried out flaring at the Wombat 1 well.

I have shared the concerns of the parents of my students, and endorsed their (unanswered) letter voicing this concern to the then Minister of Health.

I have applauded the decision by the school council to return a cheque (donation) from lakes Oil.

I have an overriding concern for the wellbeing of my students in relation to the air quality they would be subjected to, being within a kilometre of a developing gas field. (The risks to children breathing air contaminated by flaring gas wells

and leaking emissions, has been presented to the Inquiry by Doctor Jo McCubbin).

I have a concern for the drinking water supply for the school and the township as Wombat 1 is within 100mts upstream from the source of our town's water. This entire area is subject to flooding.

I have concerns regarding the transparency and honesty of Lakes Oil and their respect for our community. I was responsible for alerting our community of Lakes Oil's plans to de water Wombat 1, as I happened to be arriving home after dark and followed a vehicle putting letters into mail boxes. These letters turned out to be community notification of their intention to begin the process the following day.

I do not feel there is any place in a densely populated area such as Victoria for the unconventional gas industry and I am committed to fight for a complete ban. Thank you for accepting my submission.  
Kirra Boulton.