



Mr Keir Delaney,
Secretary,
Environment & Planning Committee,
Parliament House,
Spring St,
MELBOURNE 3002

Submission to Inquiry into Unconventional Onshore Gas Mining in Victoria

Dear Sir,

My family owns and operates a farming property on the Coastal Plain between Woodside and Seaspray in Gippsland. This district is currently subject to an exploration licence held by mining company Ignite Energy. I am writing to inform your Committee that I do not support any form of onshore unconventional gas mining (including coal seam gas, tight gas, shale gas and underground coal gasification) and strongly urge your Committee to recommend banning this industry from being established in Gippsland and the rest of Victoria. A survey undertaken in the Seaspray area showed 98% of residents are against the industry. Surely this shows that the mining companies, and indeed the government, have no social licence to establish such an industry here.

Relating to Points 2 and 3 of the Terms of Reference of your Inquiry I make the following points:-

Unconventional gas extraction would put at risk the water held in the extensive groundwater aquifers upon which all district residents rely for stock, domestic and in a number of cases, irrigation water. Should this water be contaminated, it would almost certainly be the end of the productive farming businesses presently in operation. Contamination of the soil by the toxic chemicals and waste water used in the fracking process and stored in above-ground settling ponds would also be a huge threat. The health of farming families as well as the livestock would be severely compromised.

Our district forms part of the catchment to Australia's largest inland lakes system - the heritage listed Gippsland Lakes. Imagine the environmental damage to this unique system in the event of a flood. Contaminated and toxic water in settling ponds as well as the exposed soil, due to the mining operation, could all be flushed in to the lakes system.

Many farmers, with the assistance of Landcare programs over the last 25 years, have spent much time and money improving farming practices to stop nutrient run-off and therefore improve the health of the local waterways and lakes. Is all this work, a legacy of the late Joan Kirner, a complete waste of time on all counts when multi-national mining companies can have a free hand to potentially 'vandalise' the attractive countryside, pollute the aquifers, waterways and lakes and contaminate fertile farmland? All because these company directors and shareholders think they have a right to make a profit. No matter the lasting destructive consequences!

This Unconventional Onshore Gas Industry has had a long time to prove its practices are safe and yet there is ample evidence from countries such as the USA as well as here in Australia, that they have been unable to do so. In the words of one analyst: "in the rush to supply CSG to China, Australia could forfeit its water security, and consequently its food security....It seems clear that every Australian has good reason to be concerned about whether Australian CSG mining will impair the Australian way of life."

Please ban this industry in Victoria.

Kirsty Irving

