

To whom it may concern,

My name is Kerry Woodward. I am a post-graduate student of agricultural development here in Victoria, and for years now I have been a strong advocate for effective action on climate change. As a young person in Victoria I have a keen interest in the future of this state. I will still be here 50 years from now, and hopefully so will my children and grandchildren. It is blindingly evident to me that we must avoid unconventional gas mining at all costs. It has been so destructive elsewhere in the world and Australia and so it will be here.

As a student of agricultural science and development I have spent time in both Gippsland and Western Victoria. Producing high quality food and animal products is hard work, and many farmers pride themselves on their skill and produce. How are these farmers going to continue to produce high quality food if water tables become polluted? Evidence from around Australia and the USA has shown that unconventional gas represents a real threat to our farmland.

We need to look to new sources of energy. It is clear that we cannot continue using fossil fuels, governments around the world have realised this and are acting on it. The federal and Victorian governments have failed to effectively support the renewable energy sector. We have seen the incumbent federal government continually attack the institutional and financial infrastructure needed to shift our energy sector from non-renewable to renewables. In Victoria, the scrapping of anti-wind laws implemented under Premier Baillieu was promising. However, we need the government to do more. We need the government to support the communities in the La Trobe valley in shifting to a new economy. We have already seen what rapid and drastic job losses can do to rural communities when the State Electricity Commission was privatised in the early 1990s. There is no need for a repeat, but it will require strong governance from both federal and state governments.

I recognise that the fossil fuel industry provides jobs, and I would advocate a strong role for government in helping shift employment from the fossil fuel sector to the renewable energy sector, or to other industries. Significantly however, in Victoria we do not have an existing unconventional gas sector, so no jobs would be lost – only the apparent creation of jobs, which surely could be created in other sectors. We could instead focus job creation within sustainable areas. Consider, for instance, what the Earthworker Cooperative has been doing with solar hot water manufacturing.

We can learn from the experiences of those in the United States, and from those closer to home in Queensland and New South Wales. Clearly, unconventional gas is a poisonous and damaging industry. Gas companies may make a few dollars, and create a few jobs, but we have much more at stake. Our farmland, our water supply and our rural communities all face destruction at the hands of unconventional gas mining.

Considering all the facts, I advocate for a permanent ban on all unconventional gas mining in Victoria. I am asking for the Victorian government to stand up and be a leader, to promote clean energy and a prosperous future for all Victorians.

Kind Regards,

Kerry Woodward