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The Secretary  
Environment and Planning Committee  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Spring Street  
MELBOURNE 3002

Dear Mr Delaney,

**RE: Terms of Reference, Inquiry into Unconventional Gas**

Exploration and mining of Unconventional Gas can pose significant risk to the local agricultural economy, water supplies and natural environments. In the Rural City of Wangaratta the community has expressed concerns about such risks.

In 2011 detailed investigations confirmed and mapped a large aquifer resource, the Ovens Deep Lead Aquifer, along the Ovens River between Oxley and Killawarra. This roughly coincides with a map of potential natural gas included in the "Report on community and stakeholder attitudes to onshore natural gas in Victoria." (The Primary Agency 2015)

This aquifer is a critical water resource for the future security of water supply for the urban centre of Wangaratta, a town of nearly 20,000 population. It is also the basis of Council policy to encourage use of the aquifer to enhance agriculture in the area. Council is concerned to protect the aquifer for public health and local benefit. For this reason investigation of the possible impact of Unconventional Gas mining must be specific to local areas, not only a statewide consideration.

In addition the Ovens River corridor in this location has high environmental values, being a listed heritage river, and also as a very significant intact corridor of vegetation in this landscape.

This is the basis of the following comments on the Terms of Reference (TofR).

TofR (1) identify and evaluate different gas sources eg coal seam gas and tight sand gas

TofR (2) examine these risks and mitigations for the specific gas sources and the specific gas filed, including impact on the Ovens Deep Lead Aquifer and the Ovens River. Include risks due to construction, distribution systems and decommissioning.

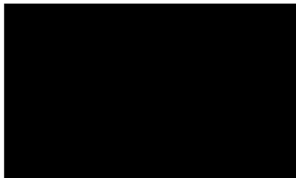
TofR (2) and (3) Examine these items both generally and for the areas shown on the map noted above.

TofR (4) Compare the affordability (b) and greenhouse emissions(c) with other potential energy sources eg solar power and wind power. In part (c) include both source emissions and fugitive emissions in the distribution system. It is assumed part 4(c) refers to all greenhouse gases in carbon dioxide equivalents.

TofR (5) Performance standards must match the beneficial use of the threatened water source. For example as aquifers supply drinking water, standards must ensure this beneficial use is not threatened. Also in the Ovens Basin the high environmental values must be protected.

Tof R (6) concerning community engagement – past experience in this municipality shows that the community expects a very high standard of engagement commencing during the exploration phase. The TofR should reflect this.

Yours sincerely



Brendan McGrath  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**