

Keir Delaney,  
Secretary,  
Environment & Planning Committee,  
Parliament House,  
Spring Street,  
Melbourne VIC 3002

10/07/2015

Dear Committee Members,

I write to you as a concerned member of the community and a volunteer with the Coal and Gas Free Communities campaign and Friends of the Earth. I am involved in this campaign because evidence, for example from America and Queensland, prove that unconventional gas is not a clean energy source and that it has devastating impacts upon people's health and on other industries such as tourism and farming. I do not support any unconventional gas exploration or production and I believe there should be a permanent ban on the industry in Victoria. Please see below where I have addressed points 4 – 6 of the terms of reference.

*(4) the ability of potential onshore unconventional gas resources contributing to the State's overall energy sources*

Unconventional gas is unlikely to provide an affordable energy source for domestic consumers due to the development of an export gas industry in Australia. Unconventional gas industry developments in Victoria will feed the demand of overseas consumers. Gas producers have not been legally required to prioritise providing unconventional gas locally, nor do they have incentives to do so. Victoria consumers will have to compete with the overseas market, which is highly likely to increase gas prices.

The Unconventional gas industry would release greenhouse gases including methane. When fugitive methane emissions are included in analyses this pollution nullifies any reduction in emissions associated with the transition from coal to gas.

Victoria's future energy sources and infrastructure should focus on renewable energy. There is 30 years' worth of gas available offshore with existing infrastructure which can be used for the transition to renewables. Victoria should be following the example of countries that are moving their infrastructure to renewable energy sources. Victoria is endangering its

economic future and energy security by ignoring the need to develop expertise in renewable energy production and supply.

*(5) the resource knowledge requirements and policy and regulatory safeguards that would be necessary to enable exploration and development of onshore unconventional gas resources,*

This industry poses a risk not just to clean soil, water and air, but also to the climate. It is unconscionable to develop a new industry that will greatly contribute to global warming. This industry has had decades in America and years in Queensland to demonstrate that it can operate safely. It has failed to do this with increased seismic occurrences in Ohio (New York Times, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/08/us/new-research-links-scores-of-earthquakes-to-fracking-wells-near-a-fault-in-ohio.html>), the destruction of other industries such as farming, and a litany of horrific health impacts including cancer and reproductive problems (Moss et al, Australia Institute, 2013, <http://www.tai.org.au/content/fracking-good-your-health>).

The effectiveness and standard of current safeguards on fossil fuel industries in Victoria should be considered. The fire in the Hazelwood mine last year demonstrated that safeguards are not effective enough to protect us even if they are implemented, which they frequently are not. The industry has shown its callous disregard for people's safety and health, including their workers, with GDF Suez refusing to pay for the lifesaving measures implemented by the state (The Age 2015, <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/hazelwood-owners-gdf-suez-refusing-to-pay-18-million-mine-fire-bill-20150706-gi6e6y.html>). Given industry's legal responsibility to their shareholders it is inevitable that the state and local communities will be left paying clean up bills, health costs, and insurance claims. Another example from the coal industry is that power stations installed scrubbers only when it was financially beneficial to them to do so. Once this incentive was removed by a change in government - and of course an immediate change in government policy - the scrubbers were removed.

Finally, I have seen exploration wells and evaporation ponds in Seaspray, abandoned by the gas industry and in a state of total disrepair with toxic water leaching into the soil and evaporating into the air. This is plain evidence that they cannot be trusted to respect local water supply or implement even the most basic of safeguards.

*(6) relevant domestic and international reviews and inquiries covering the management of risks for similar industries*

Research has clearly shown that this industry is highly risky. Last year's scientific report by NSW chief scientist Mary O'Kane found that it was "inevitable that the CSG industry will have some unintended consequences, including as the result of accidents, human error, and natural disasters". Even if the industry miraculously manages to avoid these unintended consequences, research has proven that fracking has negative health consequences, as for example in the Australia Institute's research paper *Is fracking good for your health?* (mentioned above).

In summary, this industry is unlikely to have positive economic or energy supply benefits for Victoria and is inevitably going to have a negative impact on other industries and on people's health. Allowing this industry into Victoria would be highly undemocratic given that communities across Victoria have demonstrated that they do not want this industry and there is no social licence for it. There should be a permanent ban on this industry.

Regards,

Alison Leahy