

Joint submission to Vic Inquiry re Unconventional Gas
Gayle Margaret, Peter Ramon, Andrew & Linda Corcoran 9th July 2015



JOINT SUBMISSION TO: Victorian Environment & Planning Committee
Inquiry into Unconventional Gas 9th July 2015

Dear Victorian Environment & Planning Committee Members

Thankyou for this opportunity to present our view that this Industry not be enabled to proceed in Victoria. We have discussed our main reasons below.

We believe this Inquiry creates an opportunity for the Victorian Government to differentiate itself. Victoria is well placed to enjoy the real energy, economic, environmental and social opportunities of confronting Climate Change.

All we need is the political will to change course from our reliance on fossil fuels. This is already happening in South Australia and around the world.

It is a critical time. We do not want the Government to miss this opportunity.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely
Gayle Margaret, Peter Ramon, Andrew & Linda Corcoran

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INTRODUCTION

Gayle and Peter are retired local residents and Linda and Andrew holiday in Mirboo North and hope to build and retire here soon. We have been following this matter ever since the Gippsland region first came under application by Mantle Mining for an Exploration Licence for CSG (as well as for coal) in early 2012. Our concern was first raised by the fact that the Applicant, Mantle Mining, felt it was satisfactory to advertise (as legally required) in the Warragul Newspaper. People began talking. Then we realised during media coverage of the Federal Inquiry headed by Bill Heffernan that communities in Queensland were also very upset with the way Mining Companies were treating them when accessing their land for CSG Exploration. As a result of this, the Federal Government empowered the SCER to develop a National Regulatory Framework for this industry.

SOCIAL LICENCE

The SCER Report highlighted the need for community acceptance of this Industry in order for it to proceed and so created the concept of SOCIAL LICENCE. We support all Victorian communities opposed to this industry.

We have been active members of Coal & CSG Free Mirboo North (formerly Friends of Gippsland). This group is part of an alliance with over 40 groups throughout Gippsland and together with groups in North & Western Victoria, forms Lock the Gate Victoria (currently over 70 groups). The first thing each group has done is survey its community door to door. So far, about 50 regions under EL have been surveyed by these groups and found that between 85% and 99% of their communities do NOT want this Industry in Victoria. As a result, these communities have formally declared themselves Coal & Gasfield free. We understand from this that the majority of communities under EL have formally declared that there is no social licence for these companies to explore, extract, process or export unconventional gas.

Having organised and participated in many meetings and public forums over the past 3.5 years, it seems that local communities are very capable of doing their own research, sharing information, deciding their position and taking actions. Through these groups we have been able to participate in and comment on every stage of government decision making about this Industry. Because of and through these groups we are able to provide informed community opinion.

These groups and many 100s and 1,000s of like minded people from across Victoria who support these groups have been researching, sharing and debating information about this industry for the last 3-4 years. By way of feedback from Open Days Mick Maguire (Community Consultation, Primary Agency) said that about 75-80% of people were opposed to this industry, 10-15% for and 5-10% undecided. However, after Primary Agencies quantitative (weighted) phone survey, the results were about 30% opposed, for and undecided. Both results are significant because they show that:

- There is almost unanimous opposition in communities under and near ELs;
- A lot of people across Victoria have heard about the industry and community concerns; and
- Approximately 30% of Victorians are either strongly opposed or opposed to this industry.

On this basis, the government can be certain that there is no Social Licence for this industry to proceed in Victoria.

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Various mechanisms for undermining Social Licence and dealing with this community opposition have been floated but do not meet the community's expectations that government listen to community concerns and protect the public interest.

Landowner Veto: The right for individual landowners to allow access to their land by mining companies and their representatives and to negotiate individual contracts seems reasonable. However, our natural resources are commonly not individually owned and we have seen within Australia and other countries that the impacts of this industry are widespread and long term ie. not able to be contained on one property. This also creates conflict between neighbours and within communities especially where horizontal drilling (up to 3kms underground) occurs. Therefore, we strongly urge this panel to not allow this mechanism.

Right to Refuse: The right for individual landowners to not allow access to their land by mining companies and their representatives and to not negotiate individual contracts seems more reasonable. However, current Mining and Petroleum legislation means that Mining companies have legal access to anyone's land. In fact, mining companies can take each individual property owner who does not allow them access to their land to the Civil and Administration Tribunal in their State. To date mining companies have not taken this action even once. The success of the Lock the Gate movement across Australia has been to enforce individual trespass rights and to have strength in numbers. After community surveys, whole communities have declared themselves locked to mining companies and their representatives.

Despite this, landowners do not have the legal right to refuse access to their land by mining companies (see Privileged Legal position of Mining Companies below). As such, Senator Larissa Waters has introduced a Bill to give landowners across Australia the right to refuse access to both coal and gas mining companies. This would effectively allow all Australian landowners to legally Lock their Gates. However, this falls short in the same ways that landowner veto does.

Exclusion Zones & Selective Buyback Schemes Licence by Licence: The right for State governments to create exclusion zones for this industry is seen as a way of protecting water catchments of heavily populated cities or of protecting prime agricultural land in rural communities. It is also a way of accepting that communities are determined to oppose this industry for the long term. However, this has the problem of seeming to give preference to some communities over others like the densely populated cities of Sydney and New York when all communities face the same risks from this industry and the impacts do not stop at borders.

It is also a very ad hoc response by government. The NSW government is currently in the process of extending its buyback timeline to September and of negotiating which ELs will be and won't be bought back. This also raises the problem that governments may trade some EL's to not go ahead in favour of allowing others by the same or other mining companies to go ahead. This is the current public perception in NSW.

Because the NSW government did not adequately look into this industry and community concerns before it enabled this industry to proceed, it is now in the awkward position of seeming to make its own apologies to communities who are strongly opposed and to mining companies. Although the use of setting a date after

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which no more ELs will be issued and of buying back existing ELs that have not been used seems to be an effective option (especially where there is a Moratorium in place that has prevented them all from being used, as in Victoria), it may only add to more conflict between mining companies, communities and the government as mining companies either rush to make use of their ELs or to negotiate their buyback.

Royalties for Regions: This has been floated as a means of compensating communities directly because they are directly affected by having this industry in their region. However, our natural resources are commonly owned, not regionally owned and the impacts of this industry are widespread and long term and do not stop at regional borders. It is important to note also that this is an admission of the high level of impact this industry has on communities closest to it. This can only be seen as a pay-off or bribe and is not the way mining companies or governments should be conducting themselves.

All these strategies are aimed at undermining strong, organised and effective community opposition to this industry. After 3-4 years, we can see that community opposition is only spreading and deepening. The public expects our governments to act in the public good. We congratulate the Government and the Panel for conducting this Inquiry into whether or not the Victorian Government should enable this industry to proceed and for conducting it prior to lifting the Moratorium or of enabling mining companies to use existing ELs or to issue new ELs. It is the only State in Australia to have done this.

It is now up to the Panel and the Government to ensure that the extent of community opposition to this industry and the evidence against this industry are acknowledged and accepted as grounds for strong actions to protect communities and the environment from this industry. Therefore we encourage the Panel to present a unanimous and strong recommendation to the Victorian Government that a Social Licence for this Industry does NOT exist in Victoria and so the industry cannot proceed.

CO-EXISTENCE OR MULTIPLE LAND USE

The SCER Interim Report also created the concept of CO-EXISTENCE or MULTIPLE LAND USE for areas under EL. Co-existence overrides or “overarches” all other Federal, State and Local Government planning and land use laws. It signals the rights of Mining Companies over other land uses/economic sectors like farming, tourism, forestry etc., over other water users/uses like food and fibre production, tourism, hospitality etc. and over whole communities ways of life. Landowners and whole communities are obligated to accommodate this Industry.

This has had the effects of causing significant stress for landholders and communities and of holding up investment in existing sectors and for incubating industries. It has also confused rural planning and development. People are unable or unwilling to commit to State and Local Government policies to significantly increase the agricultural production of Gippsland. Rural people and existing industries need clear, consistent and reliable government decisions so that they can plan for their future lives and businesses.

Although Victoria contains only 3% of Australia’s arable land, it punches well above its weight, producing about 1/5th of Australia’s Agricultural Production. Whole communities and business sectors are dependent on Agriculture, a clean-green image

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and Tourism. Food security, food safety, the natural beauty and development of rural populations depend on the quality of these businesses. No other industry should be given the right to monopolise the land, water, soil, air and environmental resources that the quality and integrity of these industries and quality of life depend on.

Therefore we encourage the Panel to present a unanimous and strong recommendation to the Victorian Government that Co-existence or Multiple Land Use should NOT be mandatory in Victoria.

PRIVELEGED LEGAL POSITION OF MINING COMPANIES

The legal system highly favours mining companies over communities and the environment. These injustices are clarified by the Environmental Defenders Office, Victoria (EDOV now Environmental Justice Australia EJA). In its Report “Reforming Mining Law In Victoria”, the EDOV recommends reforms to our Coal and CSG regulation because it currently “...fail(s) to protect or respect regional communities, fails to protect key natural resources (like groundwater and prime agricultural land) and treats the environment as an afterthought.....(It) does not give (people) information about projects that may affect their health and livelihoods and...does not give (people) a real say in whether or how mining goes ahead...(The EDOV) condemns the privileged legal treatment that the mining industry receives. (It feels that this is)...based on the shaky assumption that mining is an inherently desirable activity, the public benefits of which always outweigh the costs. (This) privileged treatment is in stark contrast to the equivalent rules for renewable energy. The laws that apply to wind farms in Victoria, for example, are a lot more stringent than those that apply to coal mines...Recognising these failures, the (EDOV Report) calls for reform (including)...more protection for the environment...more rights and respect for regional communities...any person to have the right to appeal a licence decision on the merits...(and)...to enforce a breach of the mining laws.” We support the EDOV’s criticisms and recommendations.

In addition, the previous State government legislated for economic considerations of this industry to be given preference over all other considerations. Hence the Reith Report. This is also unjust and needs to be redressed so that economic considerations are given equal consideration to all other matters integral to this industry.

Further, the public does not want mining companies to have this privileged legal position any longer. The public is more aware and educated now and understands that this privilege has come at considerable cost to communities and our environment. With Climate Change and the Environment consistently polling as the top public priorities, now is the best time to address this imbalance in our legal system and to consider which fossil free energy resources we need to adopt and how we can best do this to limit environmental and social impacts.

As evidenced by last year’s Community Renewable Energy Congress in Canberra, many communities have organised or are organising to take up further energy efficiency and renewable energy generation at household, business, industrial and community based scales. Even Electricity Distribution companies are beginning to understand the benefits of generating and using electricity close to where it is generated and distributing electricity locally and further afield as/when needed.

Therefore we encourage the Panel to present a unanimous and strong recommendation to the Victorian Government that this industry not proceed in Victoria because it is

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contrary to community expectations of a clean, green energy future that avoids the worst impacts of Climate Change.

LOBBYING

In stark contrast to community campaigning, "...the mining industry spends about \$50 million a year trying to buy influence. And most of that is done in-house not by third party lobbyists. They wine and dine every relevant staffer and beaurocrat. Increasingly, resource departments see themselves just as an arm of industry. There is a revolving door of people who work in the beaurocracy one day, resource industry the next. And it is largely unregulated." (see The Saturday Paper 4th July 2015)

The community's trust in government is further undermined when a former Federal Minister for Resources like Martin Ferguson leaves politics to work for the resource industry, when many so-called experts on the Independent Expert Scientific Panel work for the mining industry, when ICAC NSW finds evidence of corrupt dealings between a Minister and a mining company and when Earth Resources presents its findings to the APPEA Conference in Melbourne last May but does not make the same information or meetings open to the media and the public for scrutiny. Public comments made by our Politicians (eg. Tim Pallas, Tony Abbott, Joe Hockey etc.) tend to favour the Mining Industry over other industries and also undermine public confidence in consultative processes and are seen to pre-empt the findings and recommendations of public Inquiries.

This is the strongest evidence that our Governments are too close to the Mining Industry and that government decisions are unfairly influenced to favour mining companies and the industry as a whole. Therefore we encourage the Panel to present a unanimous and strong recommendation to the Victorian Government that it establish Climate Change as the context in which it will determine all decisions in regard to what future sources of energy will and won't proceed in Victoria.

NEED, BENEFITS, POTENTIAL or OPPORTUNITIES OF THIS INDUSTRY

The Industry and Governments argue that we need the CSG Industry because it will provide NET BENEFITS to Australians now and in the future. Each of these is refuted as follows:

Economic – The CSG Industry will provide income through royalties and contributions to GDP for current and future generations of Australians. The nett revenue that accrues to Victoria as Royalties would be minimal once subsidies, tax concessions and limiting tax liabilities are subtracted (see TAI Reports).

The industry creates public costs and receives significant public subsidies. Nett public benefit is very small but profitability for a small number of shareholders and wealthy owners is considerable. It is well documented that the majority of profits go overseas and are NOT shared or taxed in Australia. Over the last 15 years the top 10% and especially the top 1% of Australians have got richer while the rest of the population's income has stagnated (see 4 Corners). Do we want to enable an industry that largely profits the very rich? Company and shareholder profits are the motivation behind this industry – whether it be via increasing asset values that are tradeable by simply holding an EL or Retention Licence or via production for the international export market. Specific costs that accrue to the public and for which the industry bares little or no responsibility include:

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- road maintenance and repairs due heavy truck use;
- declining health, medical and wellbeing costs especially long term
- public disruption due to 24/7 noise
- devaluations of assets ie. homes, farms, businesses, towns
- devaluations of our social assets ie. public/crown lands, reserves, state forests and national parks, water, soil and air resources etc.
- losses in existing sectors and jobs as well as the availability of tradespeople for other sectors
- 3-4 year boom of building phase and bust of production phase for communities (see Landline 26th June 2015 – what happens after CSG?)
- maintenance of infrastructure after production and abandonment of wells
- scientific investigations, reports, consultations and inquiries carried out by governments as well as the various bodies already established to advise on this industry eg. IESPanels, the legislative changes required to regulate the industry and the legal cases to gain penalties etc.

Add to this any real financial consequences for non compliance, compensation, accidents, contamination etc. and the industry seems less viable. If this industry was required to pay the real costs paid by landholders, community amenity, displaced sectors, our environment, health etc. then a common wealth fund for infrastructure would be created as in Norway where royalties are extremely high.

Shareholders, investors and financial organizations are divesting from this industry both within Australia and overseas. People are also opting out of fossil fuel sources of energy for renewable sources eg. Powershop. Due to urban sprawl and loss of agricultural land, the trend in housing is to buildings with smaller footprints, passive design, energy efficiency, energy ratings and their own renewable generation, storage and distribution systems. This is happening with businesses too as people retrofit old buildings. People are much more mindful of Climate Change and protecting our environment, looking to government to show leadership on this and doing what they can to avoid climate change impacts and to protect our environment. These trends will only grow.

Energy Security – Australia has a gas supply shortage especially in NSW and demand for gas supply will increase This is not true. The Industry does not want access to Victorian gas resources in order to supply the domestic market. This Industry is export oriented where prices are much higher and so more profitable. The Dairy Industry & APM Mills have raised the problem for domestic supply that this chase for international gas markets may have especially for businesses that solely rely on gas.

The opposite is true. Due to large gains of energy efficiency and large takeup of renewable energy resources and passive design, Australia/Victoria could close 3 coal fired power stations. It is closing the one at Anglesea. Communities are pressing for the closure of the Hazelwood station (the oldest and dirtiest).

Victorians/Australians are very concerned about climate change and are doing what they can to avoid major impacts. They also want governments to consider this industry within the context of overall energy and climate change policy and planning.

In the USA the chase for shale oil was aimed at reducing the country's reliance on Arab Oil. It was also expected to be a cheap source of domestic energy supply. Instead the trend has been back to coal fired electricity (see New Scientist)

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Sustainability - The Industry is sustainable. Bill Heffernan's Senate Inquiry refuted this. The Inquiry estimated that CSG Wells have a maximum life of 10 -15 years and that the whole CSG Industry has a maximum life of 30-50 years.

Environmental –CSG is cleaner than coal and coal fired power stations and so contributes less to carbon dioxide emissions and climate change. Bill Heffernan's Senate Inquiry refuted this. Reports by both Southern Cross and Melbourne University also demonstrate that methane leaks by the CSG Industry are 7 to 25 times worse for Green House Gas Emissions and Climate Change than carbon dioxide.

Our ground water resources are so precious in quantity and quality (especially during droughts and for maintaining water tables and preventing salination). The industry sources and uses a lot of water in its drilling activities. It also relieves a lot of underground water pressure to access the gas trapped in coal seams, shale and sandstone. All of this water is contaminated with chemicals used by the industry and with naturally occurring chemicals that can be toxic. However the SCER highlighted that very little is known about the effects of these chemicals in the doses and combinations that they are both added and released by the industry. SCER initiated an international research project to look at this. These results are expected to be available in a few years.

Having contaminated this water, referred to as“co-produced water”, it is stored, treated and sold to other users. This is **false economy** especially when access to water resources is becoming more difficult and expensive requiring allocations and licences that can be traded as a valuable asset. There can be no limits on access to groundwater for depressurisation as connectivity is generally unknowable until drilled. This will cause administrative problems for allocations, licences, prices, valuations and tradings and create longer term problems.

Further, the public is adverse to treated water, there have been numerous problems associated with contaminated/treated water, production of salt kilometres long in QLD, salinity is a major problem and there is currently no way for the industry to deal with the brine that remains after treatment.

Cheap Domestic Energy – CSG will provide a cheap source of energy for Victoria and Australia's Eastern States. This industry is export oriented and is expected to dramatically increase costs of domestic gas supplies simply because of the impact of being part of the international gas market. This will have a much heavier impact on poorer households and less competitive businesses. Businesses have raised the likelihood of decreasing availability of domestic gas supplies because international markets will pay a higher price. This will also cause problems for businesses who do not have other forms of energy supply/are solely reliant on gas eg. Aust Paper Mills

Best Global Practice Codes, Self monitoring and Adaptative Management for Safety -

The many risks intrinsic to this industry that have been raised over the years by Victorians/Australians are documented in the SCER Interim & Final Reports and in the Community Consultation Interim & Final Reports.

The SCER Report assumes that with the 18 Best Global Practice Codes outlined, these risks can be satisfactorily managed by the industry. However, these risks are unacceptable to communities.

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It is expected that the Industry MAY (it is not obligatory) adopt Best Practices, would self monitor and report as well as use adaptive management to solve problems in the field where and when they arise. The industry is a complex network of contractors and subcontractors making accountability and responsibility very difficult.

The industry is only required to MITIGATE unpredictable and unforeseen problems. It is not required to prevent or avoid these problems that are often not known prior to drilling. There have been numerous accidents and problems with this industry both within Australia and overseas. Often the industry is slow to report or make public, reluctant to accept cause, keen to deflect responsibility and accountability, slow to comply with government regulations, reluctant to pay even small penalties preferring to take legal action.

Government Departments are always under staffed, do not have adequate powers and are required to give mining companies notice of inspections, audits etc. The current public debate about this industry demonstrates that it is the community who often bring matters to the attention of the government, the public and the legal system when required. At the same time, governments are cutting the budgets and tax exemption status of community and environmental groups. Communities will only come under more stress and pressure from this industry if enabled by government.

The trend with governments is towards de-regulation and one stop shops to reduce supposed red and green tape. International Trade Agreements, it seems, will also reduce the social and environmental protections previously afforded by governments. "The latest documents show Australian (government) support for stronger limits on government regulation of licensing, qualifications and technical standards in all services...Australia seems happy to sign up to binding agreements that lock in corporate profits, but oppose similar agreements that serve the public interest." (see The Saturday Paper 4th July 2015)

Without a price on carbon or methane, this industry is able to worsen climate change for everyone and be paid to pollute under the Federal Government program. The industry's reputation will only worsen.

The long term impacts of this industry, especially those associated with well integrity, fugitive emissions and well abandonment will leave a legacy of problems for generations to come. The infrastructure of this industry is a perpetual legacy and cannot be remediated. Visits to existing wells that have been abandoned previously attest to this. These "capped" wells would fail an audit of their long term integrity and reveal a complete lack of monitoring and responsibility by the mining industry.

There is ample evidence (peer reviewed, scientific, investigative and experiential) to refute the industry and government claims that this industry is safe and can be adequately regulated. As such, the supposed need for and benefits, potential and opportunities of this industry are also refuted. Therefore we encourage the Panel to present a unanimous and strong recommendation to the Victorian Government to this effect.

GOVERNMENT ROLES

The SCER's Final Report also audited and outlined a range of Legislative and Regulative minimums that all Australian Governments should put in place before/in order for this industry to proceed. We also understand that the Victorian Government,

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through the Attorney General's Dept. has asked all Department's to consider and report on necessary changes.

Although we are very pleased that the Government has maintained the Moratorium for another year while this Inquiry is held, this again has signalled to communities under ELs that the Government may be preparing to put in place the conditions for this Industry to proceed in Victoria – even before the Public Inquiry has begun. (see Lobbying above)

The SCER's Final Report moves away from the idea (posed in its Interim Report) that our Governments have a role in educating (persuading) the public about this industry. However, the Community Consultation Final Report states that people undecided about this industry want "authoritative" information from their governments. It seems we want to be able to trust our governments to provide reliable, unbiased information. We do not want slick advertising campaigns paid for with tax payers money. We just want governments and their departments to do their job of providing public information in an open, transparent and accountable way, of including the public in decision making processes and of ensuring adequate scrutiny, rules of disclosure etc. For reasons discussed above (see Lobbying), it is vital that governments understand this.

It is obvious that only our governments can do certain things. The industry has had plenty of time to take on the evidence against BTEX chemicals and Fracking and to ban their use within their own industry, for example, but has NEVER done this. It has fallen to governments

Victoria is different to other Australian States and Territories. It is much smaller in area, has much smaller agricultural holdings and tourism attractions, has a much denser population (even in regional/rural areas), has a very diverse economic mix, has a robust economy and has a secure off shore Bass Strait gas supply (that will last for another 30+ years according to Peter Ryan). All this makes it possible for the Victorian Government to stand apart from other States and Territories. On this basis, it can decide that this Industry is not suitable for Victorian conditions. By its very nature, this industry would have an overall adverse impact on Victoria.

As discussed above (see Safety) no amount of government regulation will make this industry safe. It is time to draw a line and say that no more ELs will be granted and to develop a way of rescinding/withdrawing/cancelling/buying back/compensating existing ELs and Rentention Licences. If existing legislation doesn't include grounds for this, then the government should introduce mechanisms into legislation to enable it to act in the public interest. Therefore we encourage the Panel to present a unanimous and strong recommendation to the Victorian Government to this effect.

CONCLUSION

The future for Victoria is to take on an active role in limiting climate change impacts to less than 2 degrees Celsius. Our government must therefore do everything it can to not create more greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide and methane) with more fossil fuels (coal and gas).

The future of the fossil fuel industry has been placed in doubt more recently with statements made by China and the USA as well as the G7. More and more the fossil fuel industries are becoming outdated.

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This industry and governments have used the argument that Victoria/Australia needs to export coal and gas to developing countries like India in order to provide them with energy and so lift them out of poverty or lift their standard of living. 4 Corners recently challenged this idea countering that it is more likely that such countries/markets will bypass old, costly fossil fuel technologies and go straight to new Renewable technologies. They likened it to what has happened with Telecommunications in developing countries. Instead of taking up our old wire based phone and internet technologies, they have gone straight to mobile services.

Energy Conservation is central to suburban and city people's lives now at home, work and in doing business. The trend is to efficient use of energy, passive design, energy rated homes (including embedded energy) etc. Urban sprawl is impacting our food growing areas. Land is already running out forcing up prices. People are giving up their ¼ acre block to live in apartments, 2 storey homes with smaller footprints and down-sizing. People understand the need and will continue to contain their energy costs and impacts.

At the same time, farmers (and the general public) are dismayed by the lack of protection that prime agricultural land and water resources is getting from our governments in the face of the prospect of this Industry, let alone their livelihoods that have sustained generations and developed a thriving, reputable agricultural sector for both domestic and world markets.

“Pressure is mounting on the Federal Government to announce strong cuts to carbon pollution ahead of a massive global meeting in Paris in December. You may be sceptical about another global meeting to tackle climate change, but think about what's just happened in the past couple of months:

- **Global investment in new renewable energy is now greater than investment in fossil fuels (1)**
- **An unprecedented alliance of big business, unions and civil society organisations joined forces to call for strong climate action (2)**
- **The Pope called for “decisive action, here and now” to halt climate change, joining other church leaders and high profile public figures including Prince Charles and even pop-idols One Direction! (3)**
- **China and the U.S. have publicly accused Australia of not doing their part to fight climate change (4)” (from NSW Nature Conservation Council 10th July 2015)**

Throughout all our discussions with Government (Federal, State and Local) we have repeatedly been told that whether or not Victoria enables this Industry to operate in Victoria is a State Government decision.

There have been generations of community investment in this region (like others, whether rural or urban) that will continue for generations as communities increasingly look for ways to add value to/improve where we work, relax and live eg. Community Foundations, Business Groups, Sporting Groups, Social Groups Community Energy

Hubs and Sustainability Groups. As the Final Community Consultation Report shows, right across Victoria, people's number one priority is the environment. Polls

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consistently tell us that Climate Change is our number one priority. Victorians are looking to government to take on these problems and to resolve them. Considerations of climate change ie. reducing greenhouse gases substantially and protecting our environment ie. air, water, soil, fauna and flora are therefore paramount in people's minds. Therefore, any decision about our future energy sources needs to be made within this context.

Clearly then, this industry will not provide Victorians with sufficient nett financial benefit (in royalties, taxes etc.) , a cleaner source of energy, a cheaper source of energy, a safer source of energy or protect our environment and communities. It will create Victorians with hefty costs for its management and regulation, contamination, emissions, accidents, legal actions etc.

Therefore we encourage the Panel to present a unanimous and strong recommendation to the Victorian Government that it take strong actions to not enable this industry to proceed. Such actions may include things like:

- Ensure this Industry does not go ahead in Victoria
- Uphold the concept of Social Licence
- Accept that there is NO Social Licence for this industry (especially in rural communities under Exploration Licence and generally across Victoria)
- Reject the concept of Coexistence/Multiple Land Use
- Reject the privileged legal position of the mining industry
- Reject the need for this industry
- Accept that this industry is too risky
- Accept that the industry has not done enough to demonstrate it's corporate citizenship
- Reject the notion that the government and/or the industry need to better "educate" the community or provide "better" information
- Accept that no amount of government regulation and best practice by industry will ensure the safe operation of this industry
- Accept that the costs outweigh the nett benefits of this industry
- Set a broad policy direction for Victoria that:
 - reduces carbon pollution and greenhouse gas emissions including methane eg. zero emissions by 2040, assist farmers to reduce their methane outputs etc.
 - limits climate change impacts
 - protects rural and regional communities, economies, our environment and ways of life
 - transitions Victoria from a fossil fuel based economy to renewable energy sources
 - sets a Victorian RET
 - reserves Bass Strait gas for domestic consumption protects Victorians (especially the poorest and our existing businesses) from the high gas price increases that this industry will cause for all Australians because of its export orientation to international gas markets