

To the Environment and Planning Committee,

Apollo Bay Community Against Fracking (ABCFAF) is a group of concerned locals who are committed to opposing unconventional gas exploitation. Via events, film screenings and forums, the communities of the Otways and surrounding areas have made it clear to us that an unconventional gas industry has no social license.

ABCFAF seeks a permanent ban on all forms of unconventional gas exploitation, including coal seam gas, shale gas, tight gas and underground coal gasification. Legislators who work toward this permanent ban will, undoubtedly, enjoy deep and active community support.

The industrialisation of rural areas brought about by unconventional gas activities, and the air and water pollution it brings with it, would significantly damage the Victorian landscape whilst providing little or no economic or social benefits. In fact, an unconventional gas industry in Victoria is likely to have a severely detrimental impact on the environment, land productivity and the health of the public. A study done by McCarron in the Tara gasfields of Queensland, shows extensive and shocking negative impacts on the health of residents who have had the unconventional gas industry forced upon them.

Furthermore, many farmers in that region had their wells and bores contaminated so severely that they could be set on fire. Given Victoria is far more densely populated, we are likely to be far more heavily impacted by unconventional gas mining and processing than those in Queensland.

The list below, prepared by Friends of the Earth, succinctly outlines our concerns:

### **Health Impacts**

- local children have near universal and severe skin irritations and asthma which worsens with proximity to the gas fields. Severe and recurrent nosebleeds are common.
- Severe neurological effects: McCarron found one third of children at Tara had parasthesia (abnormal sensations and numbness) and some had “abnormal movements” (central nervous damage).
- Severe effects on the unborn: US studies have shown 100% increase in neural tube defects and 30% increase in congenital ear defects.
- Huge increase in particulates which are class one carcinogens
- Wide range of toxic chemicals which show levels 10-100x above safe levels
- Existing health reports have suffered from poor methodology such as being based on affected people volunteering information only or intermittent testing which was discontinued, and are also hampered by the confidentiality agreements

### **Environmental Impacts**

- release of very potent greenhouse gases including methane, that nullify any GHG saving associated with the transition from coal to gas
- unconventional gas extraction uses masses of water, draining our scarce water resources
- aquifer contamination with toxic chemicals
- release of naturally occurring BTEX compounds and other contaminants into the atmosphere and into groundwater
- “produced water” is left in ponds that will inevitably leak or spill or sprayed on local roads

- multiple earthquakes are associated with fracking and csg globally
- toxic acid rain which strips paint off cars (Ph 4.36 McCarron)
- failure rates of gas wells increase each year

### **Agricultural Impacts**

- contamination of water (flammable water) with toxic chemicals, leading to poisoning of livestock and contamination of our high quality agricultural industry products
- increase in groundwater and soil salinity
- depletion of groundwater
- contamination of water (flammable water) with toxic chemicals

### **Community Impacts**

- immediate community impacts include division and mistrust, then falling property values as the industrial process occurs and health impacts start to bite, agriculture being impacted, followed by families being bought out under confidentiality agreements, and communities being closed or relocated.
- unconventional gas extraction has near universal local disapproval, is strongly resisted, and proceeding is against communities self determination.

Unconventional Gas is also unlikely to be an affordable energy source for consumers. The energy cost of extracting the gas is high, compared with conventional gas, and as it is a finite resource, it does not resolve the energy crisis in the long term. Additionally, should any of this gas be exported, Victorian consumers will be competing with international industry. **A much better option is to look at ways we can reduce or eliminate our need to use gas.** We urge you to focus your time and support on this, and on all other renewable energy sources.

Over 60 communities across Victoria have declared themselves frack free, **meaning they will refuse coal and gas companies entry into their communities if the moratorium is lifted**, and about 74% of the Municipal Association of Victoria has voted to oppose unconventional gas and fracking in this state. There is no social license for this industry in Victoria.

Please immediately legislate a permanent and unequivocal ban on unconventional gas in the state of Victoria.

We don't want it. It is dangerous. It is dirty. It is irresponsible. And we will not allow it in our state.

Sincerely,

Apollo Bay Community Against Fracking