

Rosemary Maher
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To Whom It May Concern:

Submission re: inquiry into Unconventional Gas in Victoria

I am a resident of the Meerlieu area and a farmer. I do not support Unconventional gas mining (UCG) and believe it would have negative social and economic outcomes for our area.

This view is supported by the Meerlieu and District Community.

98% of the community said 'no' to unconventional gas mining and celebrated their decision at a public declaration event in October 2014.

Response to the terms of reference

1. the prospectivity of Victoria's geology for commercial sources of onshore unconventional gas

I believe the returns to the government of a UCG industry in Victoria would be negligible compared to the current returns from agriculture and tourism (Clean and Green)

Why would the Government put our agricultural industry at risk?

2) the environmental, land productivity and public health risks, risk mitigations and residual risks of onshore unconventional gas activities

I believe the Government should err on the side of caution.

There are numbers of instances of negative health effects linked to UCG.

It would be ill considered to allow this industry to develop considering the numbers of documented events of 'contamination' associated with UCG.

3) the coexistence of onshore unconventional gas activities with existing land and water uses including-

Agricultural production and domestic and export market requirements

Agriculture is central to Victoria's economy.

The areas under mining license include highly significant areas of farmland.

Our agricultural products are marketed nationally and globally as 'Clean and Green'

UCG would put this intrinsic identifier a risk.

Bio-security

All areas of agricultural production are governed by Quality assurance programs to ensure that the product we sell meets the standards of the market nationally and globally.

As meet and beef producers we have to meet the requirements of the National Vendor Declaration system (NVD) which is managed by Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA)

We have to declare that our products are free from contaminants.

Our product is tested regularly and rejected if it does not meet the identified standards.

Properties can be quarantined and refused access to markets if significant diseases or contaminants are found.

This has happened recently to a farmer at Fiske; through no fault of his own his product has become contaminated and his stock cannot be traded.

We had an instance recently when our property was quarantined because of possible 'footrot' in sheep. At the same time the Government vet tested for 'foot and mouth' disease as part of our national bio-security program.

We are covered by stringent bio-security requirements.

How will the Government ensure that mining company employees/contractors accessing farming properties will meet Bio- security requirements?

Our district had Lovegrass, a predatory invasive weed spread across the whole district by a mining company which did not follow agreed protocols.

Who will pay to address negative Bio security issues on farms as a result of UCG activities?

Water security /Contamination of groundwater

Farming in this district is totally dependent on continued access to good quality groundwater.

Any contamination of the groundwater would mean the end of farming in this area.

There is no surety that the aquifers would not be breached; there are numerous documented instances in Australia and overseas that show this has happened.

Southern Rural water has illustrated that the aquifers across Gippsland are all linked although at different levels and with varying recharge rates.

When my husband was a member of the Sale GSPA concern was expressed regarding the potential of old water bore casings contaminating the aquifer; let alone the contaminants that could potentially flow from UCG extraction.

The aquifers are already fully allocated for irrigation licenses and no new licences are being allocated.

UCG requires substantial water to operate the process. The same water that will be returned to the surface with more salt and the 'additives' used for the mining process.

When are the mining companies going to tell us what the additives are? Are they pollutants/contaminants?

Where is this water allocation going to come from?

Industrial Landscapes

Our area has a focus on broad acre farming supported by a number of smaller niche market agricultural enterprises. We would not be able to efficiently run our businesses with UCG activities occurring. It would turn our properties into 'industrial landscapes'.

Roads, drill pads, settling ponds/dams, lights, flaring and noise plus unlimited access by vehicles would severely restrict our ability to run our businesses successfully.

In other areas where UCG operates farm prices and the ability to sell properties have both been reduced.

Individuals have millions of dollars invested in their farming enterprises.

Who is going to be responsible for meeting the cost of the decline in capital values if UCG occurs?

We recently purchased another farm to allow us to introduce a regenerative and sustainable production system. We have also committed substantial capital in fencing, water reticulation and solar energy to meet our strategic goals.

Who would defray this capital expenditure if our business was inhibited by UCG?

An unconventional gas industry in our area would put our current agricultural activities at risk.

I do not believe the Agricultural industry and the Unconventional gas industry can co exist.

I do not want strangers coming and going in my backyard. My farm is also my home.

4) the ability of potential onshore unconventional gas resources contributing to the States overall energy resources including-

UCG would not provide a competitive source of energy for consumers.

We are currently having the price of gas set by external forces with intense demand from overseas for 'gas'.

There is currently a good supply of conventional gas offshore. In the Age 15/4/25 BHP Petroleum Chief Mike Yeager said, referring to Australian gas supplies, 'There's plenty of gas to supply ... for you know indefinitely'.

Esso workers were recently striking at Longford for a cheaper domestic rate for conventional gas. Could the Government explore this option, to reduce the price of gas for Victorian users?

Renewable energy

I believe Government support for renewable energy options would provide a viable alternative energy source for businesses and consumers.

We do not need UCG.

On our farm we use a solar system to generate power and a beautiful 14' Southern Cross windmill to bring water to the surface which is then distributed across the whole farm with gravity reticulation.

We have had to make substantial investment to implement the system but now we have no 'energy' bills. We are considering going off grid. Many farmers are adopting renewable energy to power their businesses. There are new innovations in renewable energy all the time; there are no carbon dioxide emissions

Why doesn't the Government pursue these options rather than considering UCG?

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

We have an old adage, "It is too late to shut the gate after the horse has bolted."

In all the material I have reviewed and the information I have from people associated with UCG, I think there are too many risks associated with UCG to allow the business to develop in Victoria.

Numerous Government instrumentalities around the world have banned UCG or the process of Fracking.

I would like UCG banned.

Yours sincerely

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