

TRANSCRIPT

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

Inquiry into unconventional gas in Victoria

Torquay — 12 August 2015

Members

Mr David Davis — Chair

Ms Harriet Shing — Deputy Chair

Ms Melina Bath

Mr Richard Dalla-Riva

Ms Samantha Dunn

Mr Shaun Leane

Mr Adem Somyurek

Mr Daniel Young

Participating Members

Mr Jeff Bourman

Ms Colleen Hartland

Mr James Purcell

Mr Simon Ramsay

Staff

Secretary: Mr Keir Delaney

Research assistants: Ms Annemarie Burt and Ms Kim Martinow

Witness

Ms Kristin Bitmead.

Ms BITMEAD — Thank you. I was not going to speak today, but mine is a very personal view.

The CHAIR — We should get your name and location.

Ms BITMEAD — My name is Kristin Bitmead, and I live in Paraparap, which is 10 minutes that way. My husband and I made the sea change down to this area three years ago. We are both professionals. He currently works off the farm in Geelong. It has been great for him to get employment down there. I have not been able to. I am a corporate interior designer, and I still commute to Melbourne. We are currently in the transition of my working on farm, and we are investing currently in our property — we are on 50 acres — for it to become an organic produce property. We are looking at garlic and honey particularly.

My question is: I am looking at investing in our property and potentially employing other people from the region to come and do this, but why would I do that if a well is opened up down the road and then my organic produce and things — or the perceived perception of that, and maybe not even perceived, the air quality and everything that I am growing — would be affected? We are trying to create jobs in other ways down here, but I am really concerned with that.

Secondly, you can see I am 28 weeks pregnant. I hope to have further children as well, and just the pure health implications that Mike spoke about earlier, which I had already been aware of, but he touched on them again, are so terrifying to me, and I am sure to anyone in the area who is looking at having families, particularly in that early stage. There are a lot of young people buying up farms, investing in our area at the moment and moving down here. It is a very family friendly area, so the health implications to me, not just the investment, are considerably concerning.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much. Before I draw these proceedings to a close, I thank Hansard staff and the secretariat for their assistance today. I again put on record my thanks to Surf Coast Shire for providing the facilities for us today. I also thank the audience, many of whom have been here for a fair bit of the day.

Committee adjourned.