

# 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 Wendy Klason.

**The CHAIR** — Could you just state your name and location, and organisation if you have one. Keir will give you the knock in about 2 minutes when you are done.

**Ms KLASON** — I am actually going to be talking about peat, and I have a couple of pictures here but you might like to look at those later. My name is Wendy Klason. I live near Seaspray, and my property is adjacent to the Lakes Oil Wombat well. I have had many communications with Lakes Oil since the mid-2000s. I believe that effective management is not possible. For example, there is no guarantee of the long-term integrity of the gas well casings. I have talked about this in my written submission.

Onshore gas and oil activities always run the risk of well fires, and Wombat 2 well and the proposed Wombat 5 well are both quite close to a thing commonly called Farrells Swamp; I call it Farrells wetland. Wombat 2 is about 1400 metres from the peat lake. It is actually a 32-hectare dry peat lake. It used to have water — about half a metre to a metre typically — until the early 2000s. It was dry in the drought; it has not refilled. In 2010 a gas flare escaped from Wombat 2 and a fire was started. Lakes Oil was not equipped to put it out. They did have water there, but they had no way of towing the water. Before it was extinguished about 10 hectares of ferns and grass were burnt and several pine trees. Eventually, two or three CFA trucks managed to put it out.

Fortunately, it headed north — actually in the direction of my house, which is a couple of kilometres away. It did not get there. But had it headed to the west, within 200 metres it would have got into some pine trees, possibly travelled another 500 metres through the pine trees, and then it only had about 800 metres or 900 metres of bushland to get to the eastern end of Farrells Swamp. Can I continue?

**The CHAIR** — Yes, you are nearly done. We have about 2 minutes, so we are well under.

**Ms KLASON** — Experience in Gippsland and throughout the world is that it is almost impossible to put out peat fires, even if they are underground, even if they are underwater. Had this happened or if it is allowed to happen in the future, the effects would be devastating. It would be like the Morwell mine fire all over again. This is a crucial wildlife corridor. There is farming area around, and also the human community, which is already suffering huge and significant mental health effects from what we are already experiencing.

**The CHAIR** — Wendy, thank you.

**Witness withdrew.**