

31st October 2015

Hon David Davis MLC (Chair) and Committee Members
Environment and Planning Committee
Parliament of Victoria
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE, VIC 3002

Dear Mr Davis and Committee Members,

RE: Parliamentary Inquiry into Onshore Unconventional Gas Mining in Victoria:
Response to the Victorian Interdepartmental Submission (# 658)

The attachment to my submission to this Inquiry (#879) highlighted numerous flaws with the community and stakeholder engagement program conducted by the Primary Agency, including its final report.

In the Victorian Interdepartmental Submission on page 43, section 5.6.2, headed "Community Perceptions of Unconventional Gas in Victoria," I noticed, with great alarm, that the quantitative survey of the report from the Primary Agency was referenced without saying those results were from one question in a 15-minute random telephone survey; readers of their submission are left with the impression that the result (from that one question) can be extrapolated to represent the general view of the Victorian community.

It is important to note the following:

- The key question of the quantitative 15-minute telephone survey (as referenced in the Executive Summary of the Primary Agency's final report) was "loaded" in its construction: "Considering what you currently know about the onshore gas industry how likely would you be to support the introduction of the industry in Victoria if it turned out to be feasible in the future?" What does feasible mean? The phrasing of this question is leading respondents into thinking feasible means agreed, accepted, or technically possible? It also potentially leads respondents into replying in a more positive way, so they would say "yes" or be more likely to support the industry. The response to this question was used as the overall summary of respondents' feedback when it is said "29% of the respondents indicated support for the industry while 27% indicated that they do not support the introduction of an onshore natural gas industry". **Therefore, it is of great concern that the Victorian Interdepartmental Submission has quoted the results of this question (without stating the question) or how the response was obtained.**
- The Primary Agency's final report and its Executive Summary concentrated on results from a 15-minute telephone quantitative survey that was a smaller sample size (960 people, 400 of whom were from Metropolitan Melbourne) compared to 1500 people involved in their Open Days, held in regional Victoria.
- Primary Agency consultants did not ask participants at the Open Days the same questions that were asked in the 15-minute random telephone survey.
- No quantitative results were either collated or reported for the Open Days. As advised by Primary Agency consultants, most of the Open Day participants were against unconventional gas mining (UGM).

- How can a random 15-minute telephone survey be community engagement?
- Most of the telephone survey respondents were from Melbourne. It is not stated whether those who were telephoned from rural areas were from regional towns or rural districts; the people who are directly affected live in rural districts, which is where the mining licences are located.
- Looking down the column of responses to the telephone survey questions, the highest percentage for most is in the "Don't Know" column. Polling people with no knowledge won't provide a meaningful outcome even where questioning is adjusted to take that into account. For example, most people would think finding energy is a good thing without necessarily considering what might be involved in getting it. The general community would not understand how industrial and invasive UGM is without some knowledge about it.
- It is also not surprising that people who don't know anything about it would think the UGM industry would create jobs without having the facts that mining crowds out other industries that already contribute much more financially to the economy (please refer to data from the Australia Institute) and that many of the jobs are short-term and are fly in/fly out with workers generally living in camps.
- Asking uninformed people (as is evidenced by the results of the quantitative survey) in a 15-minute survey about what they think and their attitudes is not going to help address the concerns of those people who are informed. The report is silent on the extent of concern by the general community that would have been expressed at the Open Days, by people who would have, for the most part, been informed about the issue.

So for the Victorian Interdepartmental submission to quote the results of one question in a random telephone survey leaves the impression that this result is representative of general community views. In 70 rural communities (so far), the Lock the Gate movement has asked Victorian landholders (where there is an exploration mining licence on their land) if they want gasfields and over 95% of the respondents have said "no" to unconventional gas mining.

Thank you for your consideration of the above.

Yours sincerely

Debbie Carruthers

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