

Executive Officer
Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
East Melbourne 3002

Dear Ms Simmonds

Re Inquiry into Greenfields Mineral Exploration and Project Development in Victoria.

On behalf of the Mardan/Mirboo North Land care Group, we would ask the inquiry to consider the following;

b) the regulatory environment.

The present regulations in respect of Mining Companies advising the landholders of their intention to take out Exploration Leases are totally inadequate.

Recently Mantle Mining took out a Mining Exploration lease which affected several of our members. The notices for these leases were published in the Age, Warragul and Latrobe Valley papers, none of which are local to our area, so we had no idea of what was going on, and not every one reads the papers.

If the power is going off for a period of time (a temporary inconvenience) the power company sends a letter to everyone who will be effected.

If however your property is going to be destroyed by mining or maybe having the ground water depleted and poisoned by fracking, (which would devastate farming businesses, people's and animal's health, the environment etc etc) the only notification you have is an obscure notice in a paper and not necessarily your local paper.

We are very concerned about the apparent lack of regulations in respect to the ever increasing practice of Fracking in order to obtain Coal Seam Methane. We asked the DPI for information on regulations and we were referred to the earth resources site "A Guide to Coal Seam Methane for Landowners"

1. This confirmed that all through this area to Bairnsdale is suitable for Coal Seam Methane.

2. "Concerns over water . page 3" mentions that large volumes of water is produced initially and must be disposed of in a safe and environmentally manner

- it fails to mention the fact that the process of fracking the seam requires the pumping in of water together with other chemicals into the seam at pressure in order to crack it open to enable the gas to flow out.

- it also fails to mention that the water which is pumped out from the fracture is naturally saline and contains a range of carcinogens, heavy metals and radionuclides which is naturally present in coal seams.

- It then follows that a proportion of initial fracking chemicals together with the naturally occurring chemicals, now released will find their way through the now fractured coal seam into the surrounding ground water.

3. "Concerns over water page 3" also mentions "most frequently , water is reinjected into subsurface rock formation. In some cases, the water is allowed to flow into surface drainage or is put into evaporation ponds"

- it then follows that this water which can be highly saline and infused with man made and naturally occurring chemicals will be reinjected into subsurface rock formation, and in some cases be allowed to flow into surface drainage or be put into surface ponds, thus contaminating our soils.

4. "Concerns over water page 3" states " in NEARLY all cases, water management will be subject to the Environment Protection Act and will require a management plan approved by the EPA.

Our concerns as a group of people dedicated for caring for the land are;

We refer to the granting of Mining Exploration Licence 5337 for Mantle mining by the Victorian DPI to explore for "Coal bed methane, coal (Brown or Black). This licence covers some of our group member's properties

Coal bed methane is extracted by Fracking process which involves the injection of water plus chemicals into the coal seam and fracturing it which releases other naturally occurring chemicals, being underground some of the chemicals will eventually find their way through the fractures in the seam and other natural leakage into the ground water, which in turn will contaminate our prime agricultural farm land.

Surely this contravenes the Environment Protection Act 1970, State Environment protection policy, Ground Water of Victoria.

The Fracking process also involves the removal of highly saline water infused with naturally occurring chemical released from the fracturing of the coal seam, together with the other chemicals used in the fracturing process which is most frequently reinjected into subsurface rock formation and in some cases allowed to flow into surface drainage or put into surface ponds. This process will obviously contaminate our prime agricultural land and surely this would contravene the Environment Protection Act 1970, State Environment Protection Policy, Protection and Management of Contamination of Land.

Does this Mining Exploration Licence and may be many others for the Exploration of Coal Bed Methane come into the category of the small number of cases excluded from the Environment Protection Act as mentioned in d. above?

i) consideration of costs and benefits of Greenfields minerals exploration (economic, social and environmental), and whether there are opportunities to improve the management of potential conflicts between exploration and other land uses.

- economic costs.

The entire area of South Gippsland (which is presently covered by mining exploration leases) is prime agricultural country. Our milk, meat, potatoes etc. supply the needs of Melbourne and other centres. The economic cost of mining of any kind due to the loss or destruction of highly productive land would be enormous for the local farmers and producers. The economic cost to Melbourne and other centres would also be large as food would have to be sourced from further afield.

- social costs.

This follows the economic situation, with the loss and or destruction of highly productive land which would seriously impact on the farmers and other producers as they would be without a means of making their living.

- environmental costs.

Coal bed methane is extracted by Fracking process which involves the injection of water plus chemicals into the coal seam and fracturing it which releases other naturally occurring chemicals, being underground some of the chemicals will eventually find their way through the fractures in the seam and other natural leakage into the ground water, contaminating it and in turn our prime agricultural farm land.

The Fracking process also involves the removal of highly saline water infused with naturally occurring chemical released from the fracturing of the coal seam, together with the other chemicals used in the fracturing process which is most frequently reinjected into subsurface rock formation and in some cases allowed to flow into surface drainage or put into surface ponds. This process will obviously contaminate our prime agricultural land.

Opportunities to improve the management of potential conflicts between exploration and other land uses. We suggest that the importance of prime agricultural land would negate the need to even consider mining it. "You can't eat coal" If legislation is enacted to this effect, there would be no conflicts.

On behalf of the Mardan/Mirboo Landcare Group, I would like to thank you in enabling us to put forward our opinions and concerns regarding this important inquiry.

Yours in Land Care

Phil Piper (President)