

Submission to :

WA Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation in WA 2017

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I am a community member who initially went to an information session to find out what 'fracking' and 'unconventional gas' was about as it had arisen at a monthly meeting I attend. I came away from the information session with the belief that even if only one of the claims were true, it was catastrophic and fracking/ unconventional gas techniques should not be allowed to be conducted.

Since then I have learned more and am specifically concerned about health and wellbeing impacts and refer the panel to the references to scientific papers at the end of this submission – all these researchers cannot be wrong.

- There is plenty of scientific evidence that unconventional gas mining and fracking is harmful to health. Communities living near gasfields in Queensland and the USA have reported serious health effects following the commencement of unconventional gas operations. These conditions include respiratory ailments, nose throat and eye irritations and neurological illnesses.
- Water and chemical use and wastewater production from fracking places WA's vital water resources at risk from contamination and depletion. Our state is one of the driest places on earth and climate change is already leading to decreased rainfall in southern WA. Our land and environment are under growing pressure from a lack of fresh water. We cannot afford to put our precious groundwater at risk for a short term and unnecessary fracking industry. Agriculture needs to be prioritised over any other industry and the gas industry is certainly not a compatible neighbour.
- Landholders and Traditional Owners don't have the right to refuse access to oil and gas companies in WA. This creates stress and leaves individuals and communities worried about their financial security and their ability to farm their land. The cards are stacked unfairly in favour of the gas industry and human rights are being ignored for a resource that is no longer strategically vital as it can and should be replaced by renewable forms of energy generation.
- Research into the economic and social impacts of the unconventional gas industry in Queensland has shown that the industry has led to a reduction in community well-being and social cohesion. It also caused a deterioration in local skills and infrastructure; few additional local job opportunities; and limited economic benefit to the wider economy.
- Unconventional gasfields in Queensland have seen reductions in farm productivity, efficiency, land values and credit availability to landholders.
- Fracking leads to large deliberate and fugitive emissions of methane, adding to climate change.

It is clear that no amount of regulatory framework can adequately protect public health or the environment.

It is also clear that it is not a case of 'if' something happens, but 'when' and that when it happens there is no remediation. The damage is done.

The first control option in any risk management process is to eliminate the hazard if possible and as unconventional gas mining is not a necessity, I urge the panel to heed the scientific research available and make a recommendation to permanently ban fracking and all unconventional gas mining in Western Australia.

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