

PERSONAL SUBMISSION TO THE SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY INTO HYDRAULIC FRACTURE STIMULATION, 2018

My name is Julie Burr and I live with my sister, Dianne Horne, within the boundaries of the old Irwin town site, at [REDACTED], 16 kilometres east of Dongara. I am writing this submission on behalf of both of us.

My sister and I used all of our financial resources to purchase our 5-acre block in 1996 and build our home. While we were aware that WAPET had been active somewhere in the area in the 1960's, we were unaware of any active gas exploration or retrieval operations at that time. We blithely went about establishing our block – our “little slice of heaven” – totally unaware of what was happening just across the Irwin River and just over the ridge to the north-west of us. We fully acknowledge that ignorance is not an excuse. We should have done a broader and deeper exploration of what was going on regarding gas exploration, but we were totally unaware of the totally helpless situation we have since been confronted with.

It was not until we met one of our more distant neighbours closer to Dongara, that we became aware of the full extent of the gas activities almost on our doorstep. We were horrified when we finally **did** do some research and became aware of the extent of operations surrounding us. We were even more horrified when we were informed of how little power any of us have in stopping gas and oil companies from accessing our property, either on the surface or underground. Neither do we have any power to control their access to our groundwater supplies, which we rely on for our own water supply. While we **have** installed rainwater tanks for drinking, we then became concerned that they could very easily become contaminated, thanks to the strong prevailing south-westerly winds blowing across the gas field directly to us, and depositing polluting particles on the rooves of our house and shed. While we **do** have our groundwater tested annually, we cannot afford to have our drinking water also tested. While my sister and I are both of an age where we are prepared to take the risk, we feel it is totally irresponsible to expose those of our neighbours who have young families, to any risk of contamination.

Not only do we live with this fear of contamination, we also have to live with the possibility that our groundwater supply could well be depleted due to the enormous volumes of water required to carry out the fracturing processes. A representative from the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, added further concerns regarding this at one of our community meetings in Dongara, by admitting that upwards of 70% of all water used in the “fracking” process was not retrieved because it contained high levels of radioactive and other naturally occurring contaminants resulting from the process itself. That water can **never** be accessed or reused, either by humans or plants and animals. The long term threat to the whole environment, not just our small lot, is unacceptable.

Our final objection to all gas and oil companies operating anywhere in the vicinity of human habitation arises from their almost **absolute** disregard for the mental health of any people who are unfortunate enough to live **anywhere near** their operations. While they claim that they are in constant communication with **all** stakeholders, this is a lie. One extreme example of this is with the ongoing consequences of wells being flared (i.e. pressure-tested.) For whatever reason, be it the geological formations our house has been built on or its position on the side of a hill, we suffered a week of almost constant ground vibrations, air pressure fluctuations and noise that can be likened to having a huge jet engine rumbling away on our doorstep. These effects were extreme for my sister, who is retired and at home alone most of the time. I arrived home from work one day to hear the television blaring loudly. I found her inside, on the verge of tears. The noise and vibrations had distressed her so badly that I then sought contact details of the company responsible. I was finally given a phone number by one of our neighbours and I was able to contact the company directly. To their credit, they **did** shut the operation down, but at no time were we advised of their intention to carry out prolonged “flaring”. Neither were we personally given a contact phone number. The final insult came when we were made to feel like we had lied about the physical impact of the operation, with the company telling us that there was no way that it would have created the impact we reported. Strangely, though, further flaring events did not have the same results for us, after they apparently made some “modifications” to their processes. So much for keeping **all** stakeholders “in the loop”.

The main arguments of our submission are that we live in constant fear. Fear of having our water supply either contaminated or depleted, which would make it impossible to continue living where we do. Our second is that the strain of living with this constant threat takes an enormous personal toll on people's health, both mental and physical. Every morning when we both wake up with stinging eyes and blurry vision, we wonder if it is a result of gas

companies' activities. Whenever I wake up to find I've had a blood nose overnight, I wonder should I continue to sleep with my windows open. Every time we hear that one of our neighbours has contracted cancer or some other life-threatening condition, we wonder if it's because our environment is already contaminated and that we could be next. We wonder if we should move, but even if we were prepared to leave all of our hard work of the past 22 years behind, we doubt we could sell in all conscience, even if we could find a buyer. The truth is we don't **want** to have to sell or move, and we shouldn't have to. We should be able to live without having to accept being lied to by gas companies, who are supported by the very politicians we elect to look after us and our environment. We should be able to live without the further fears that "fracking" poses.

Please consider our arguments and situation when making your findings.

Yours sincerely

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is written in a cursive style and appears to read 'Julie Burr'. The signature on the right is also in cursive and appears to read 'Dianne Horne'.

(Mrs) Julie Burr and (Ms) Dianne Horne

26th February, 2018.