

Submission to:
WA Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation in WA 2017

Pauline Cook

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

09/02/2018

I am a farmer, raised in Moora, now living and working in Dandaragan. My husband and I have been farming on our sheep and grain property for 40 years. Our farm, along with the farms of my family, lifelong friends and community members, is now under threat of unconventional gas mining. Like the vast majority of my community, I am extremely concerned and alarmed by this prospect. With other concerned community members, we conducted a door-knocking survey and found 96.4% of local residents in my area were opposed to unconventional gas mining. Other communities state-wide have similarly declared their wish to be coal and gas-field free¹.

Unconventional gas mining is an unacceptable risk to the landscape and our livelihood. The risks cannot be adequately managed and the only way to avoid the potential for damaging consequences is to prevent this type of mining from occurring. The current ban on unconventional gas mining covering the South West, Peel and metropolitan regions is insufficient and must be expanded to encompass all remaining agricultural areas in Western Australia. The ban should also be protected by an act of Parliament, to prevent it being overturned.

In Dandaragan, we are fortunate to experience both a reliable rainfall and access to groundwater. This groundwater supply is extremely valuable to residents of our area and the wider community, and is currently used for household water, irrigation and to provide a secure water supply to our livestock. In our region, the businesses of many agricultural producers would be unable to continue in the event of a contamination of their underground water supplies. A large proportion of gas wells have been reported to have some form of structural failure – and unconventional gas wells have reported higher rates of failure than other types, with over 100 instances of documented contamination of groundwater in the USA². Given the scarcity of our water resources, the irreversible nature of the potential damage and the increasing human population relying on these water supplies, the risk of contamination to our valuable water supplies is unacceptable.

No regulatory framework can reduce these risks to zero, so I urge you to ban unconventional gas mining on our land.

¹ Gasfield free surveys. http://www.lockthegate.org.au/go_mining_free

² Jackson, 2013. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4121783/>
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jun/20/fracking-wells-pennsylvania-leaking-methane>