

From: Rod Copeland
To: info@frackinginquiry.wa.gov.au
Subject: Fracking Inquiry
Date: Monday, 19 March 2018 11:58:34 PM

Dear Inquiry Panel,

Firstly I would like to comment that I consider that the terms of reference for this Inquiry are too limiting, and that more consideration should be given to the social impact on communities, the over-riding result of environmental damage to water, rivers land and air, and the impact that fracking will have on normal peoples' lives.

We are not scientists and to discount what we feel and what we observe in our everyday dealings with our land should be taken into account when assessing the impact of fracking.

The basic fact is that communities at the forefront of all this activity say they have no desire for it but the government of the day will not listen or give them fair hearing.

I am a farmer, more outside working than doing anything else and to sit at a computer for hours to find all the references for what we know in our heart is fact, can-not be fully justified even though it is requested as point of proof for a submission.

We see reports of contamination in Queensland, we see reports of land laid to waste in America and we hear of children sick from toxic fumes, and we hear an industry that claims there is minimal risk.

God help us if the risk ever increase above minimal, and I would bet London to a brick that it will.

(1) INTRODUCTION

My name is Rod Copeland and I am a 4th generation career farmer of horticulture crops namely mangoes (16,000 trees), rockmelons (upwards of 40,000 trays pa), watermelons (approx 150 tonnes pa), zucchini (300,00 units), sweetcorn (200,000- 400,000 units), brassicas (cauliflower and cabbage etc), pumpkins of all shapes and sizes and most other lines when they have been in demand by consumers.

My wife Annette and I work tirelessly on 41-42 hectares of prime alluvial loams along the Irwin River, 15 kms inland from Dongara.

As our personal ages have progressed, we are making conscious decisions to plant less repeat small crops, replacing them with more permanent tree-crops thus enabling an easier management life-style.

The soil is rich and bountiful, but for anything to grow, there is one thing that we need . WATER and a good endless supply of clean water to propagate our crops to feed the population of WA and other states.

We are currently planning to plant more mangoes, with investment into some trees with plant breeders rights (PBR).

Planning for some plantings of avocados and pomegranates is also well underway as we endeavour to identify crops that will survive in this environment and are in demand by consumers.

last year, the rockmelon industry was faced with CGMMV (cucumber green mottle mosaic virus) and a salmonella outbreak and is currently reeling from the effects of a listeria incursion that could send growers to the wall

Our produce is repeatedly subjected to costly monitoring for residues and dangerous pests and diseases.

One positive test to contaminated water would bring down the whole farming operation and

ruin a life-time of work..

Many small things can have major impact on this industry, where farming in Australia is recognised as being clean and green and amongst the best in the world.

With this in mind, I oppose fracking in Western Australia, along the grounds that where there is any risk that could endanger, what is the most important natural resource in the .world, then the only way to mitigate that risk is NOT to do it.

We are lucky to have applied for, and be the holders of a 600,000 kl water license and consider that fracking is a disastrous threat to that water.

(2) MY EXPERIENCES OF FRACKING and the OIL and GAS INDUSTRY

Within 1000 ms of our farm we have the 'slickwater hydraulically fractured' gas well, known as Corybas, spudded in 2008 and brought into production in 2011.

In 2012 it was reported as 'leaking' with gas visibly bubbling in the pit surrounding the top of the well.

It has been stated by the current operators that it was only a faulty o-ring and was repaired in normal routine maintenance. B,,,,,S

This is a complete fabrication of events.

There were highly credentialled witnesses to the event, a time lapse of three weeks was allowed to see what would happen, and even though there is round the clock 4 hourly visits by technicians to the sites when in operation, nothing was done until the question was raised in Parliament about a leaking fracked gas-well at Corybas near Irwin.

Our property at that time was on both sides of the road leading to Corybas, and within a very short time-frame of the questions being asked, I have never see so much traffic on that road, all going to the gas-well.

If it wasn't so serious, it would have been hilarious.

As I have stated, water is so important, and fracking is a direct threat to the quality of it, by the introduction of toxic chemicals to areas within and around the proximity of water aquifers, underneath the surface of the land.

My information about the threat of fracking to the land water, air and community has come from Lock the Gate flyers, news reports about what is happening in Queensland, USA and many other regions of the world where governments have seen sense and stopped current operations of fracking or banned it before it has started.

I use the internet to increase my knowledge of fracking and the more I see, the more I detest it and will do everything to stop its progress.

I firmly believe that the residents of Irwin are the only community in WA that lives directly over the top of an operational fracked gas-field in WA.

When we purchased "Yardarino", there were 2 gas-wells on the property, with Yardarino-01 operating, and in about 1995, this well was hydraulically stimulated to extract more gas.

We are at 'ground-zero' when it comes to fracking in WA.

Indeed my wife and I are actually the closest inhabitants of any slickwater fracked gas well in WA and we oppose fracking!

Within shouting distance there are more residents with young families.

To increase my knowledge, I am a founding member of F.A.I.R.(Fracking Awareness Irwin Region), I have been able to access more info plus have attended one-sided Irwin Community Round-table meetings in Dongara, promoted by AWE but just a propaganda exercise to try and convince the residents that fracking is not a risk. B...S

I read a statement at the first meeting I attended, which stated that my attendance at those

meetings was not to be interpreted as support for AWE's presence in our community, and that I did not recognise that they had social license to operate.

Conversely to what AWE would have us believe, attendance by residents of Irwin, demonstrated that AWE were not welcome in our community.

We have to listen to repeated complaints from APPEA that there has been 14 preceding inquiries into fracking within Australia, though they conveniently forget to say that a majority were initiated by industry with the obvious outcomes, but the practice of fracking has developed especially since the initial inquiry and will undoubtedly do the same into the future, so much so that anything proposed now will be perhaps 5-10 years out of date.

(3) CREDIBILITY OF THE INDUSTRY

In my eyes they in fact have little credibility.

they have tried to force entry onto my land for seismic work.

And the list could go on but for the wariness of recriminations from the permit holders, I have to bite my tongue.

I would be more than willing to waive my rights of confidentiality concerning the events on our property if AWE could be convinced to waive their rights of confidentiality, and the true story could be revealed.

There is a myriad of events that have not yet reached a satisfactory conclusion, but which cannot be aired at this time due to confidentiality, but I believe a time is fast approaching where all can be disclosed.

How I am waiting for that time!

Recently, a report was released, detailed by Climate Analytics, which stated that if all the unconventional gas in WA was extracted, that the carbon emissions from that gas would be 3 x that agreed by Australia, at the Paris Accord on climate change.

And you guessed it.

Out trots APPEA, through their mouth-piece Mr Stedman Ellis, and noticeably he did not state that the report was inaccurate, instead attacked it by saying that to get that amount of emission, every last molecule of gas would have to be extracted.

I consider we all realise that it is impossible to extract all of the gas,

BUT if only one third was recovered, we would be at the maximum levels of carbon emission.

What about all the other states including the NT that want to develop, and the incremental expansion of other industry that will also emit carbon?

The complete disregard by the oil and gas industry for all Australians is painfully on show in this type of statement.

During the flare-testing of Scenicio-03 which is the unconventional well in which the conventional Waitsia find was discovered, the noise was distracting, the smell was invasive and the burning sensation of the eyes was barely tolerable..

This was due to fact that a number of houses are directly up the valley from Scenicio-03 and with the prevailing southerly, all of the listed irritants were pushed in our direction.

Even a visiting representative of AWE to our farm during flaring was surprised at the level of noise that we had to endure.

It was noted by another local, who is somewhat sympathetic to AWE, that she had no stinging of the eyes, no smell and limited noise.

It is all in the location of the houses and the proximity to the gas-well and the fact is that we can

see the site from our property whereas she can-not.

AWE also raised the issue that Scenecio -02 was drilled and flared but they did not raise the fact that this well is in a very prominent elevated position rather than down-wind in the floor of the valley.

Thus any irritant was dispersed or blown away before it reached our area.

Moreover when Corybas, and especially Yardarino-06 which is within 300 ms of our house, was drilled and flared, the offer from the previous operators of the field was for alternative accommodation in Dongara for the period of the activity.

The industry espouses 'world's best practice' but it took the complaints of residents of Irwin to stop the intrusive flaring episode and then one pro-fracking attendee at a community round-table had the temerity to claim that we changed the method of flaring to the better.

For God's sake, the industry claims all the time they have it under control and there is no risk and they have world's best practice, and they cannot manage a flaring program, which I assume they've been conducting since they've been chasing fossil fuels.

What a load of B...S

Then there are irresponsible company executives who claim, and possibly display their prowess at imbibing 'fracking fluids', and though claimed as being the real thing, to my knowledge there is no proof that what they have ingested are in fact a complete combination of all the chemicals.

The CEO of DMIRS, Mr Jeff Haworth, claimed at the most recent Irwin Community Roundtable that he would drink fracking fluids but conveniently didn't bring any with him.

And when questioned whether he would drink the same after it had been down the well, at first he ignored the question but when pressed, he claimed he would have to look at it first.

As if any landowner gets this level of observation before he consumes or puts it on his garden or gives it to his stock or bathes his children in it..

The people most affected by fracking are situated in a locality where there is no government provided water supply and rely on their own efforts to have this important resource.

When a n employee of DMIRS claimed he would drink fracking fluids at a Community Roundtable meeting, all the attendees were asked the question who would join him.

Surprise, surprise. NO takers and an AWE employee when questioned whether he would imbibe, stated 'No , it might kill me'.

And they claim they have credibility and social license?

(4) IMPACTS

As I have stated, contaminated water would ruin a single business, curtail further development of intense farming and threaten the viability of farming in general.

Land would become contaminated and waterways would be poisoned so that native fish would die.

Air pollution would increase from methane leaking from pipes and wells, and from ponds where residue from the drilling process is dumped.

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.

Yardarino-06, a conventional well 300 ms from our house, though never developed to production was revisited in 2013 for the possibility of a work-over, but after inspection was deemed unrecoverable and accordingly, abandoned.

It was determined that in a period of less than 10 years, the column and casings had deteriorated from the underground salts to an extent that the well was unrecoverable.

There is no proof that the same will not happen in all wells, as it is recorded that 6% of all wells fail in the first 3 years and then the rest deteriorate incrementally from there.

Well failure is an inevitable reality.

Do I believe that the industry will foot the bill for the environmental disaster that will surely follow or will it be left to the taxpayer?

I already know the answer.

Property values will diminish to such an extent that there is a very chance that mortgages will be greater than real values.

Unconventional gas-fields in Queensland have seen reductions in farm productivity, efficiency, land values and credit availability to landholders.

Many residents have their life's savings tied up in properties that are under threat of being unsaleable.

This is evidenced by 3 properties, one immediately next door to me, been listed for sale and no takers.

The male owner works for a service company to the oil and gas industry but his wife laments the fact that she wishes fracking was not in this area so that the property would sell.

The other 2 properties are in Irwin and have been listed for more than 7 years and have minimal to no interest.

And all this in what was deemed the most desirable place to have a small land-holding during the 80's, 90's and early 2000's

I fear for the value of my own land holding, in which we have invested our life's savings and our energies for 3 plus decades.

It is fact than large tracts of broad acre farming land has not appeared to slow down in saleability but as for values, they have reduced immensely as is shown by the massive reduction of 'The Grange' property value and even the value of land acquired by AWE on which the Waitsia field is located.

This property has been advertised on a number of occasions but to this date is not sold.

The health of children, older people, those with underlying health issues will be at risk firstly, and then after prolonged exposure, even stronger people will be effected.

Communities will gradually break-down and eventually disperse as health problems take their toll.

As has been evidenced by our lengthy dispute with an oil and gas company, rehabilitation is not a strong point of theirs and after extracting the gas, they want out as quick as possible

I can-not give any more detail at this time but rehabilitation is a very real issue, but hopefully one day I can disclose more.

Many people ask the question of whether we have seen any detrimental result of fracking and my honest answer has to be NO but I always quantify it by saying 'that the day we do, we are well and truly fracked'.

Let's hope that the powers that be can see logical reason' or are they too just blinded by the

money?

(5) JOBS

What a misnomer, a complete fabrication.

Nothing has been shown that proves there will be a strong job opportunity for local employees, in fact it will be in the opposite.

Mitsui, if they are the successful bidder for AWE's 50% of Waitsia, have announced they will be cutting positions and doing more job sharing with their own existing work-force ref attachment 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.

(6) LONG-TERM IMPACTS.

I ask. What have we to worry about apart from waste lands, contaminated waterways, worthless small farms and houses, and unhealthy residents and a company that has extracted all of the gas and moved on with their fat wallets and left the community behind to clean up the mess.

It may sound tongue in cheek but if the approach in America is repeated in Australia, someone will have to raise their hand and accept responsibility.

Fracking leads to large deliberate and fugitive emissions of methane, adding to climate change.

(7) RENEWABLES and ALTERNATIVES

The saviour for us all is renewables.

The advent of solar, wind wave and even methods of generation not even developed should encourage and give us hope that there are methods of generating energy without contaminating the most important thing we need to keep us alive.

The underground water aquifers and even above ground water supplies that are at risk from fracking.

It should be noted that there are other means in which the water could be deemed non-potable, but it is everyone's responsibility to protect what we have and now is the time to STOP the threat of fracking and put our resources into developing safer methods of power generation.

I have found accepting the fact of threatening our water aquifers with fracking just to get gas to the cities to power desalination plants so those residents can have clean and abundant drinking water, a contradiction in itself.

What government would think that this is a just and reasonable outcome.

We are all aware the last government thought that this was how it should be but 90 plus % of the population have indicated they do not want fracking and this government should put aside 'science' because it can be used to justify most things but we know science and expert opinions have been totally wrong in the past.

Examples:/ Asbestos- don't we wish we had never mined it, an on-going health problem to 100's and the company who mined it tried to dodge their responsibility and moved off-shore

/Organochlorides- a carcinogen that causes cancer, how we should never had sprayed it on the ground and around power poles to stop white ants

/Acid rain- such a threat to Europe when sulphur from fossil fuels were burned and

combined with air moisture to form sulphuric acid and then it rained down on fertile lands.

Remember the lakes of Eastern Europe and Scandinavia with millions of floating dead fish

/Tobacco – if only the early explorers like Raleigh had never returned with this product and encouraged the masses of Europe to take on smoking .

The effects of smoking, cancer, emphysema, heart problems, poor circulation and the list goes on.

/ Gasification- where coal was ignited under the ground and allowed to burn and the emitted gas would be turned into liquid fuel

Yes it was happening in Queensland, and the result was disastrous for the community.

Finally it was stopped as an unsafe practice, and the company that was conducting the work declared themselves bankrupt and so any claims by locals were not honoured.

Even Russia and America, as the only other nations to try this ridiculous idea, had banned the practice before Queensland did.

A too familiar tale of large companies exploiting the regions and then disappearing.

It is time to put all of our resources into developing alternative renewable energy supplies and ban fracking to the waste bin before it goes any further.

(8) CONCLUSIONS

Hindsight is a marvellous thing and mankind would undoubtedly change history if they could but the past is the past.

Let's not be a slave to past stupidities, instead take the bit between the teeth and say a resounding NO NO NO to fracking and not give future generations the excuse to heap blame on this generation as being the space in time when our water supplies, our land and our whole environment were contaminated beyond recovery.

Farmers and the general population not involved in the oil and gas industry say NO to fracking and demand that this government should empower them with the RIGHT OF VETO to say NO to oil and gas entering onto their land.

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 be replaced by renewable forms of energy generation.

Land access and adequate rehabilitation, even of old sites are on-going issues that need addressing.

To protect all communities, baseline testing of water, air, soil and residents health at the expense of oil and gas companies should be the primary focus of true monitoring.

The ultimate wish is that the ban on fracking in the Perth, Peel and Southwest regions is extended to the whole state of WA and this ban would be enshrined in an Act of Parliament.

It would be ideal if the entire country of Australia followed the lead of WA and banned fracking for ever.

Whilst the directions of the Inquiry panel was not to get emotive about the issue of fracking,

when it is a very real possibility that one's whole life could be ruined by an act of an industry that is not welcome in our midst by the vast majority of residents, it is hard to put it to one side. We have lived now for nigh on 10 years with this threat of fracking and as days go by it becomes a very real possibility.

We do not like it, we do not want it, we will fight it for as long as we can draw breath and we will not accept a government that supports it.

Now that is emotion, but we have lived with it longer than any other resident of WA.

I strongly urge the inquiry to make a recommendation to permanently ban fracking and all unconventional gas mining in Western Australia.

Rod Copeland

Co- owner of "Yardarino"

A family business growing fresh fruit and vegetables for the WA public