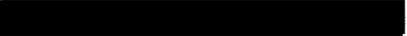


Names: David Falconer, Fiona Falconer

Address: 

ATTENTION: Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry
Locked Bag 33 Cloisters Square
PERTH WA 6850

This is a submission to the Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry

We oppose unconventional gas mining and fracking in Western Australia.

WATER is a finite resource.

- The climate of Western Australia is in a drying and warming trend which threatens the quantity and quality of our groundwater and the potential capacity to maintain natural ecosystems, agriculture and a growing population.
- The hydro fracturing process uses large quantities of water and after use the water is contaminated/toxic/poisonous and has to go somewhere.
- Waste water, whether it is 'stored' underground, in above ground ponds or treatment plants remains an unacceptable long term and irreparable risk/ hazard to people, wildlife, agriculture, underground aquifers and waterways.

LAND degradation is a problem that began with European settlement and clearing of land for development of WA and has continued to worsen.

- Fracking will exacerbate the degradation of our fragile soils with potential for wind and water erosion and heavy metal contamination.
- Increased risk of earthquakes.

BIODIVERSITY The most 'recent' State Of The Environment Report For Western Australia 2007 stated that 'At a national level, WA has 8 of 12 Australian biodiversity hotspots. At a global level, the South West is recognised as one of the world's 34 biodiversity hotspots. There is ongoing loss and degradation of biodiversity in WA. Knowledge about many species and ecosystems and some threats to biodiversity remain inadequate.'

- Fracking in WA has the potential to decimate areas of global significance, many described as 'biodiversity hotspots that support diverse, unique and endemic species of flora and fauna.
- In the mid-west of WA fracking has already occurred in National Park and Nature Reserve areas and amongst remnant native vegetation on private land without environmental monitoring or regulation.
- The protection of biodiversity is essential because of the ecosystem services it provides-for example, hydrological stability, soil conservation, flora and fauna habitat and its economic, social, aesthetic and spiritual values to humanity.

- Fracking will entail land clearing that will contribute to hydrological change, fragmentation of habitat, vulnerability to invasion by feral animals and weeds and spread of disease such as phytophthora dieback.

AIR

- Fracking leads to the release of methane and other chemicals present in natural gas. When combined with other activities associated with the industry such as emissions from compressors, trucks and the creation of dust, air pollution occurs.
- Communities living near gas fields in Queensland and USA have reported serious health effects following the commencement of unconventional gas operations with children and the elderly the most vulnerable.
- Fugitive emissions of methane to the atmosphere occur at each stage of production through drilling, fracking and distribution-not the panacea to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

LANDHOLDERS do not have the right to refuse access to oil and gas companies in WA.

- This creates uncertainty for the future of the farm enterprise and the wider communities reliant on the agricultural industry.
- Adverse impacts on farm workability, productivity and image ie 'clean and green produce'.
- Diminished land values and credit availability from banks.

COMMUNITIES

- Research into the economic and social impacts of the unconventional gas industry in Queensland has shown that the industry contributed to a reduction in community well-being and social cohesion.
- Few local job opportunities were created.
- It caused deterioration in local skills and infrastructure and limited economic benefit to the wider economy.
- It is likely to damage other industries, for example tourism.

MONITORING AND REHABILITATION

- Who will be responsible for monitoring the impacts of unconventional gas mining and fracking on water, air, biodiversity and land in WA if the moratorium is lifted?
- Who will rehabilitate and/ or compensate for damage done and over what timeframe.

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

Signed