

Submission to:

WA Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation in WA 2017

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Date: 12 March 2018

We are farmers, currently on 16.2 hectares of fertile river flat through which Ellen Brook flows, opposite Walyunga National Park, where we have raised cattle and grown hay and pasture crops over the past 16 years.

However, we previously had been dry land wheat and sheep farmers, west of Kalannie. It was there that we appreciated every drop of water we were able to salvage for family, stock and crop use. This is a low rainfall area and in the beginning we were reliant on rainwater tanks, a natural rock water catchment and bores with windmills. Viable dam sites were difficult to find and dams expensive to build. We were very dependent on carting water from the town standpipe over summer for household and stock use which was time consuming and expensive due to fuel used. We eventually did find a suitable dam site which would hold water and the new dam was a saviour.

After the 1968 Meckering earthquake and then the 1979 Cadoux earthquake we lost two bores. One dried up and one went salty which we believe to have been caused by the earthquakes changing the underground water streams – thus putting more pressure on our water supply. More water carting.

Eventually, the Petrudor Pipeline Extension of the Goldfields Water Scheme in 1996 ensured a supply of scheme water for household use. With assistance of Water Corporation, two local Shires and local farmers who contributed 1/3 of the cost via cash, labour, pipe work and tank installation, earth moving equipment and sand, 32 food producing farms in the West Burakin and Kalannie were connected to scheme water via 94 km of pipes, 5 tanks and 2 pumping stations.

We were therefore horrified to learn that unconventional gas exploration licences have been issued over land we now own and in areas of productive agricultural land, above aquifers which supply much of the metropolitan area's water and through which water flows into the Swan River.

If the infrastructure or process required for fracking unconventional gas should fail and allow seepage of chemicals into the surrounding land via leaking bore casings, seepage from waste water ponds due to breakdown of pond linings – or even another earthquake of similar magnitude to Meckering occur in any fracked area the resulting loss of “clean green” food production could be catastrophic.

Water is such a precious commodity in WA. The risk of damage to our aquifers, rivers, and dams is real and the amount of water required for fracking so great that we should think very carefully before risking our water supply by allowing fracking for unconventional gas to take place.

Ref

Lock the Gate Fact Sheet – Shale and Tight Gas Extraction

Excerpts from Compendium of scientific, medical and media findings demonstrating risks and harms of fracking 19 Jan 2018 – water contamination