

Submission to:

WA Scientific Inquiry in to Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation in WA 2017

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I am a Mental Health Social Worker, Proprietor of the abovementioned Alkimos Wellness Centre. I personally provide mental health counselling services to adults and children in the far northern corridor, reaching from Currambine to Lancelin. I am a Medicare provider. My wellness centre provides evidenced based natural therapies to the local area incorporating Yanchep and parts of Gingin. I am also a Mother of 3, and Grandmother.

I was introduced to concerns about fracking from a client who reported that licenses for fracking have now been issued as far south as Two Rocks, W.A. This was shocking news to me and others. I guess people sit up and take notice when it's in your backyard. I then became more interested in finding out about this issue, which to me is anathema to all that I believe in. I helped out on a stall at the local Yanchep markets and was able to speak with the public about this issue. Interestingly, their views were many and varied and many were completely unaware of the issues.

Although I am concerned by many issues around Fracking, particularly its water usage, I'm thinking here more about the human element and how the things we do to our environment affect us as a population.

Mental Health

Around the time I was speaking with people about the issue, the media were reporting that farmers around the country were suiciding at an alarming rate. There was a high profile case in Queensland of farmer George Bender from Chinchilla who's cotton growing business was under threat due to a lack of water – it was reported that the underground bores on his property were severely impacted by coal seam gas (CSG) mining (The Australian, 2015). Mr Bender had campaigned long and hard to end CSG activities and tragically, he ended his life. This is just one of many cases where farmers are walking off their land or worse and my question to you is: **at what cost do we jeopardise our food bowl?**

In the words of the late, great Leonard Cohen – “as he died to make things holy, let us die to make things cheap” (Cohen, You want it darker, 2016). Emotive maybe, but this is an emotive issue.

Climate change and effects on water availability

On ABC's Catalyst, March 2018, the Bureau of Meteorology reported a direct link between climate change and the extreme weather of recent years across Australia. They have tracked average

temperatures both terrestrial and marine and find that there is a one degree increase in temperature. Scientists still disagree about climate change, but it's clear that something is going on with the weather. Erratic events such as frosts in summer, hot dry weather in winter. A prolonged and more severe fire season, more intense and unpredictable with catastrophic potential. (Fire services are changing the way first responders manage this – they are having to. One way they are becoming more efficient is by using motor bikes to find spot fires more quickly and contain or eliminate them before they take hold).

The Catalyst report continues that farming is changing due to water availability. Climate change is, in fact, changing the viability of many farming industries (including wine) and that climate change poses a risk to the global economy. Corporate Australia has been warned – Climate change is no longer something we can ignore. Commerce is now driving change. The report called this an unprecedented 21st century problem.

With temperatures up and rainfall down, farmers report that land does not respond and 'come back' after a drought. Dams are drying up. Many farmers now are forced to adapt – to practice regenerative farming such as regenerating water ways and resting land. They see that adaptation is essential.

Some ways in which water issues affect our Perth community

CEO of Water Corp, Sue Murphy, in the same report, stated that Perth rainfall has dropped 30 %. Her opinion is that climate change and the lack of fresh water is one of the most urgent concerns in the world. With two desalination plants already at full capacity, another is under consideration.

A representative from Fiona Stanley hospital reports that the heat wave season is more intense and longer with an increase of 60% of vulnerable and at risk people presenting in a heat wave. Perth emergency services gather to plan the management of a heat wave nowadays. They estimate that after 3 days, emergency services bottled water would run out.

Director of Science at Kings Park noted that there are more trees dying off (particularly banksias) in Kings park.

Around the world, where Fracking is practiced, local aquifer levels drop (often up to 90 plus mtrs).

Unconventional gas extraction can use between 10 – 34 million litres of water per frack.

Considering the above comments..... we are expected to provide all this water for free to the mining industry? When our own need is so high? It is beyond my understanding.

Conclusion

Our land is unique in its vastness and remoteness. I do not want water contamination from fracking to our Yarragadee aquifer. I do not want the cocktail of chemicals that occur with deep shale fracking in our water and the detrimental long term impacts of that. I do not want my children and their children to have to deal with the fallout from this insidious industry.

I respectfully request the Inquiry Panel find that the best outcome is a legislated ban of this practice in W.A.

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