

Submission to:

WA Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracking Stimulation in WA 2017

Submitted by:

Mary Ann Rath as an individual

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For the attention of Dr Tom Hatton, Mr Philip Commander, Dr Fiona Haslam McKenzie, Dr Ben Clennell and Dr Jackie Wright

Introduction:

I'm a sixty four year old West Australian. Since learning Geography in high school I've marvelled at the artesian basin and know that this large underground cavity of water is essential for fresh water for West Australians'. Four years ago I heard the word "fracking" ,I went and investigated what this is about and even travelled north of Eneabba to view an actual well testing drilling site, surrounded by infrastructure and plastic lined above ground ponds bigger than Olympic size swimming pools filled with toxic waste that was left to evaporate. I then found out that the heath in this area was going to be seismic tested at each intersection of a 400 meter grid pattern each with a width of a tractor footprint over a large area. I've lived in this area and know that per hectare the number of different flora species is the most in the world so I saw destruction of this unique part of the world, with irresponsible action without regard to its uniqueness

I think to allow this industry to have this access to a world renowned area is destructive to the natural habitat above the ground, and then below the ground to infiltrate the underground water supply (the Artesian Basin) with chemicals and the air with evaporated chemicals is destructive to the earth's health.

I then investigated the chemicals used in the process and was horrified to think that this industry is allowed to continue. I've attended information sessions, seen documentaries and read of how this industry affects not only farmer's land, the water supply, but our air. I consider this form of gas extraction to be a bad, bad, idea for the health of the world and it needs to be banned in Western Australia, Australia and the world.

I know that the issue and legislation is considered a state issue yet I've read a news report of the Prime Minister threatening Western Australia with GST reduction if we do not allow it and that a pipe line is to be built from Western Australia to the East. Please give me hope that this independent enquiry that is underway, will not be swayed by the industrial giants and politicians (who are meant to protect us the people). I've spoken out and about this industry and the process of extraction to people in the street, collecting signatures against this practise, and 99% of the people have said "No way!"

The main points I would like to emphasise that concern me uppermost, is the impact on ground water this together with the enormous quantity of water needed to conduct this activity. Then possible contamination resulting from unconventional gas extraction and surface water through the process of extraction and the method of containment after extraction is very real. The aquifers can be contaminated by leaking wells, faults caused by the fracking process, surface spills, when well blow outs, occur, and there is human error in dealing with the process.

I'm further alarmed when I read of incidents in US state of Pennsylvania where 240 private drinking wells have been contaminated or dried up. That was overseas however so close to home is the well in the Whicher Range which was fracked in 2004 using diesel as the fracking fluid as other fluids caused the clay soils to swell. The experimental technique failed and more than half of the 1.2 million litres of diesel remains trapped down the well. And then to top it off once production ceases wells are closed using cementing and capping. In 2014 in the Pilliga, Santos was found guilty of polluting an aquifer with horrible heavy metals and all they were fined was a measly \$50,00, I would say that this a small fine and

is not a deterrent to big global corporations who i think do not care about either the people's water supply or that of the tax payers who will be required to foot the cost of any clean up, this is frightening to me and I do not see a happy future if these companies are able to hydraulically frack any part of Western Australia.

I've heard that insurance companies have refused to insure against risks associated with unconventional gas extraction, now insurance companies do their research and they look into the mitigating risks, just knowing this tells me that this gas extraction is a liability therefore a bad idea. And finally I will name three people who I've read that have worked in this industry and who are now critics: Jessica Shaw the current MP for Swan Hills; Peter Lindsay former CSG industry regulator, Qld government; Prof. Anthony Ingraffea, current Cornell University, ex consultant and researcher with oil and gas industry.

In conclusion I implore that this enquiry recommends strongly the cessation of the existing and any issuing of any future exploratory gas licences (as these licences allow the same process and includes the preparation of such sites with land alterations and digging of holes to contain toxic chemicals in this process). I also hope and expect the inquiry will agree with me to the total ban of any activity that engages with hydraulic fracture stimulation. I also expect that the recommendation will include a strong message to the Government of the day to ban this activity over the whole of Western Australia forever and make it so in law.

Peace from Mary Ann Rath

22nd January 2018