

Personal/Business Submission to Inquiry into Onshore Unconventional Gas extraction in WA

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Background;

I am Currently operating a small Bed & Breakfast/Farmstay & Floatation Therapy room from our family home in Redfield Park. My parents also live on the property in a recently constructed Granny Flat & have recently sold their property in Jurien & moved here due to health reasons & requiring ongoing future care. Needless to say we all (including my partner & I, along with my parents) have a **great deal invested in this property/business & the future of Moore River Region.** Likewise, any Unconventional Gas activities occurring “upstream” within the Dandaragan & Moora Regions also pose significant threat to existing homes, businesses, tourism, agriculture & industry within the Moore River Region, with quality water being “the life blood of the region”.

Prior to beginning the current business venture I had extensive experience & a very successful career in the Mining industry (nearly 20 yrs in total) with the last 10yrs working in various roles for one of the worlds biggest mining companies based at various sites throughout the Pilbara. Some of these **roles include, Alternate Registered Manager, Quarry Manager, Superintendent** (of various departments, including Drill & Blast, Production & Operations Planning), also Supervisory roles & operator roles in the field.

My Personal Concerns based on prior experience;

During my time in the industry I have had many dealings with Dept. Minerals & Petroleum, Dangerous Goods Safety & various Environmental agencies, developed countless Policies & procedures & conducted numerous significant/serious incident investigations. I have witnessed first hand the lengths individuals will go to “cover up” any breaches, shortcuts or mistakes they may have made, but I was also surprised at how frequently & surreptitiously even large corporations will go about minimising, or downplaying actual outcomes of some events, particularly when required to be reported externally of the business, in an effort to reduce any consequences or repercussions.

It is the norm to “close ranks” , go into “damage control” & restrict/limit any communication following such events. Involved persons/witnesses etc are very seldom privy to any final investigation findings after making their statements (other than any “actions” involving them, that may arise to prevent re-occurrence) “Whistle-blowing” is very rare, for fear of repercussions (ie. The systematic “micro management” of “problem individuals”, which may eventually lead to resignation, redundancy or termination) or, should “unofficial information” be leaked by an individual, this is in breach of company policy & swiftly dealt with via the legal team.

Here is a perfect example. During the operation of our B&B/accommodation over the past couple of years I have had the pleasure of meeting several people from all walks of life, nationalities & occupations.

During a recent conversation with one recent guest he explained that he worked in logistics, for one of the oil rig companies that operates just off UNESCO World Heritage Ningaloo Reef & that he had personally witnessed the following.

- During a transfer of crude oil from the rig to a ship the transfer hose/pipe was not connected properly, or became dislodged during the transfer. The issue was only highlighted several minutes into the operation, once the “operator” on the ship asked when the transfer would begin. The rig operator advised that over 2000 barrels had already been transferred. Needless to say, all of it (over 2000 barrels of crude) was pumped directly into the ocean. The issue was raised & the “containment”& “cleanup” crew were immediately deployed & a “communications lockdown” put in place.

He mentioned that he was of the belief that the dispersant used in this case was “Corexit” ,(the very same toxic product that BP used following the Deepwater Horizon tragedy.)

The next day when representatives from the EPA arrived there was barely any evidence of any spill at all & how comments were made by them, thanking the company for their diligence reporting such a minor spill & conducting such an effective & timely cleanup. When he read the final report he saw that only **17 barrels** was the official amount written as the spill!!!!

- The same guest also mentioned that is a **regular occurrence** that the contents of the transfer hoses is spilled into ocean, either as a result of the operators forgetting to purge the lines, or the purging system malfunctioning.

I forget the exact dimensions of these lines but I think he said 700mm round by 20mts? long

He mentioned that there were constantly many whales & other protected/endangered marine life passing by the area regularly during his time offshore, reminding him just how close they were to Ningaloo. He expressed his relief at being “Perth Based” with his role now, so that he didn’t have to face the reality of what was happening up there. (out of sight out of mind I guess)

When I asked him why he didn’t report these things to a higher authority, he replied with the same old answer that I have heard countless times previously. “It’s a great job that pays very well & I couldn’t afford to lose it.!!”

I have no reason to disbelieve this gentleman’s stories. He certainly seemed sincere & truthful, even regretful about carrying the burden of a degree guilt with him & he had no reason to fabricate any of these events during our candid conversation.

Although the above anecdotal accounts are unrelated to onshore Unconventional Gas, I guess my point here is that, with this being standard practice within large, well respected company/s, within comparatively low risk (clean) industries, then, in reality, what can we expect from smaller companies/contractors & subcontractors, who’s margins are much tighter & who operate in a short term industry? An industry which

has already proven historically (& globally) to be detrimental to the communities & environments in which it has previously been allowed to be conducted?

The sections below not only reflect my own views but also contain many contributions & views shared by many residents & businesses within the Moore River region & members of the group Gasfield Free – Moore River Region

No amount of regulation, policy or procedure introduced into the Unconventional Gas industry **can guarantee the safety & quality of our precious water & environment.**

The **only** way to **guarantee** this, is to **ban the practice altogether.**

Public Opinion, This Injury, Fracking, Corporations & Government

Any sensible person can see that onshore Unconventional Gas **anywhere** is **unsustainable & un-necessary, but particularly in W.A., where we could (& should) be world leaders in renewable energies**, with an abundance of solar & wind energy at our disposal.

Alternatively, if this short term & high risk & unsustainable activity is the governments answer to recovering Australia's economy, then we, as a nation are in a far worse predicament than we have been led to believe & we are truly doomed. The fact that our Government is even entertaining the idea, particularly in some of our states most fragile areas, despite it's shady history, both interstate & internationally, regardless of overwhelming public outcry, is further proof that true Democracy is long dead within this country.

One need look no further than the actions of Lake Oil (& Gina Rinehart) following the Victorian Governments announcement to Ban Fracking!!! If Corporations don't get their way, they now sue the Government (or more accurately the people of Australia), for lost revenue..... Has this world gone mad? Where will it end.

Are our politicians & government nothing more than mere powerless figureheads? Puppets, playing out a script, written for them by the very Corporations that control & manipulate the global economies. Pushing ahead for short term financial gain & corporate profits, regardless of long term consequences to the environment & the communities that live within them.

This has never been more evident & accelerated since the inception of the TPP. With the plans in place for a West to East Gas Pipeline, It has become increasingly obvious that there has always been an agenda to extract WA's onshore Gas. Which begs the question, was there ever any real intent to actually stop it?, Is this Moratorium & Inquiry infact nothing more than "Political Theatre", giving the illusion to the public taxpayers, that they have some kind of say in the final decision?;

- **It is quite evident that the vast majority of Western Australians (& I dare say Australians) don't want Unconventional gas to occur.** Simply look at the results of the door to door Surveys conducted by **regions all over Australia, declaring themselves Gas Free.** All of which have been conducted by ordinary, everyday Australians, giving up their precious spare time, often at great personal cost, in a desperate last ditch attempt to spell it out in Black & White to Government & Corporations. The sheer effort put in by individuals

& communities can not be under estimated. It is a massive task On average, **over 95% of all households surveyed DO NOT want Unconventional Gasfields** . This message should be listened to. This Message **needs** to be listened to.

- I have had a great deal of feedback form many people, finding it a quite ironic & a **ridiculous notion** that the inquiry should **ask the Western Australian people to provide “Scientific Evidence**, to assess the level of risk associated with the impacts of Unconventional gas extraction”I don’t mean to state the obvious, but the Western Australian people have not **yet**, (nor do they want to) been subjected to the impacts of full scale Unconventional Gas Extraction!!! This seems like an odd group of people to ask for evidence from, wouldn’t you agree?? Surely all of the evidence required would/should be gathered from the regions (& the people) who have already been exposed to the consequences of Unconventional Gas Extraction? Such as the U.S. & Queensland.....
- I wonder how many Western Australians have opted out of voicing their opinions simply because , according to the Terms of Reference, in order for their submission to be taken seriously, they need to have spent countless wasted hours cutting & pasting links to the many thousand of negative & scathing articles, interviews, inquiries, testimonies, etc available on the internet providing evidence that Fracking is a bad thing!!.....surely you jest Mr McGowan!!! In reality, the first instance in which any Western Australian will be able to provide undisputable evidence will be if/when they have been impacted by the practice first hand, & then it is too late, the damage is done.
- The only person I have personally met who lives in WA that could provide first hand evidence of the impacts & devastation caused to him, his family & his business, is a market gardener, fruit & veg supplier/seller who was driven out of his home & business in Queensland due to the consequences of CSG. He would not elaborate other than to say” good luck with the fight, but in the end they (the gas companies) will get what they want”.
- Why was there a need to Register to attend “ **Public**” meetings?
- Why were “**Public**” meetings “closed”
- Why are “**Public**” meetings not allowed to be recorded?
- Why were all of the meetings held on weekdays, when the greater majority of the public & businesses are unable to attend due to work commitments? It would appear that the above multiple layers of “conditions” or “hurdles” set out for the meetings were “**intended to minimise public participation by design.**”
- I have spoken personally with senior **members of the Water Authority**, who advised that **since the** departments initial submission (to the **Barnett Government**) **they have had no consultation** from the enquiry panel. After initially raising concerns about the impact of Unconventional gas practices back then, they were told by the Barnett govt. to “shut up & get on with it”. The main concerns are with regards to ground water, particularly in regional areas, which almost completely rely on this natural resource as the life blood of their communities, providing drinking water, irrigation, recreation & tourism. Due to the vast volumes of water required to develop each gas well & the sheer number of wells, the impact on the already scarce ground water supplies is of major concern & considered high risk to these regional communities. As is the high potential for contamination of the ground water

during the fracking process, which has the potential to render this vital & rare resource no longer potable or even suitable for use in irrigation &/or even recreation. This would have devastating consequences to the people, economies, livelihoods & entire Communities. This is a very real risk, given the often scarce reserves of ground water available, particularly during dry periods. With predicted lower rainfall over much of WA in the future, this issue is only to magnify. As they are a key stakeholder in this, I am surprised & disappointed that a great deal more consultation has not been conducted with the water Authority.

Given that it would appear that the decision to proceed with Unconventional Gas extraction in WA has already been made & that Western Australians are tired of having the wool pulled over their eyes, may I suggest the following

Recommended minimum basic Requirements & questions

that need to be answered. This may, at least, go some way towards regaining some public confidence in those they have “elected” to look after the best interests of the State, based on pre-election promises.

An open and honest dialogue is what is required between drilling/gas Companies/Corporations, government & the residents, the public & businesses to ensure transparency & establish trust between these parties.

Community

Prior to any drilling or preparation works beginning,

1. **all** residents, households, businesses within the Shire/Locality, are to be notified individually by mail of the intent to do so. The notification shall include **exact** locations of **all** works/wells & infrastructure. This will be outlined via aerial mapping & provide details of exact proximity/distances from peoples dwellings, businesses & recreational areas. This **must** also include the intended trajectory & final planned termination co-ordinates of all horizontally drilled wells. This **needs to include** any potential secondary stakeholders of **adjacent Shires & Localities** with consideration of water flow directions of Groundwater, Rivers, stream, tributaries. (ie any drilling of fracking activity in the Dandaragan &/or Moora Shires has the potential to effect groundwater & the Moore River water quality in Guilderton & Surrounds)
2. as a result of the inevitable **decline in property/land/business values** in areas associated with Unconventional Gas Extraction, the Government, in conjunction with local councils **will agree to reduce annual rates accordingly**. (precedence has been set here by Gingin council when the property prices in Seabird declined as a result of beach/dune erosion)
3. What happens if there is/are serious & catastrophic event/s, resulting in contamination of land, water, air etc? Aside from the devastating irreversible & highly disrespectful destruction of the environment & yet another nail in the coffin of mother Earth at the hands of modern “industria” & the insatiable financial Corporate greed it creates, **what safeguards exist for the residents, citizens, businesses**, communities who have built their entire livelihoods in these areas? **This is the very crux of the matter!!**
No one can ignore the fact that occasionally, despite all the best intentions, rigorous regulation, extensive research, rules, procedures, recommendations, laws

etc, **things just go wrong**. Two obvious examples that spring to mind are BP's Deepwater Horizon oil spill & the Nuclear power-plant meltdown in Fukushima. Undoubtedly, in both of these instances (and there are many, many more examples) there were countless **stringent regulations**, risk assessments, procedures, studies & **Inquiries** determining that the risks were negligible & adequate measures put in place to mitigate potential risks. But, in the end, all of the bureaucracy in the world does nothing for the victims of such events. What guarantees or safety nets exist, or can be formed to provide some piece of mind to the law abiding, tax paying, hard working citizens of these areas? The ones who are being put at risk of losing everything they have ever worked for & hold dear to them. The ones who's properties, who's land, who's water & air, who's basic right to peacefully exist, the ones who are now are being put under threat by their own government. This is the reason for so much passion & emotion with regards to Unconventional Gas extraction. Modern day "industria" has come knocking on their front door, threatening their own private space.....their safe space. Worse still, it has been allowed to happen by their own government, the last line of defence, entrusted to care for the environment & it's people in a sustainable & transparent matter, to always keep the taxpayers/voters best interests at the forefront of every decision.

People have seen the many documentaries & interviews with victims of this very practice from all around the world, there is an overwhelming amount of credible media, highlighting many negative impacts, leaving behind a very real path of environmental, community & human destruction. The public feel betrayed & they are scared!!!

4. **3. Are the gas/drilling companies required to have mandatory public liability insurances** that cover for compensation of land/property values, lost revenue of businesses, relocation costs etc.etc??
5. **What if the company simply declared itself bankrupt** in the event of an unforeseen event & in the face of millions in litigation & fines simply closed it's doors & "done a runner"? **Is the government prepared to pick up the shortfall?**
6. **Can "emergency funds" be set up**, with proceeds from licensing/ royalties & a percentage of Gas/drilling companies earnings being withheld until the completion of a project in each region as security? If things go pear shaped then this is to be distributed amongst victims. (can we trust that "Malcolm Turdfull" wont give it to Trump???)

Water, Air, Environment & Health –

Health problems associated with Fracking are not hypothetical concerns. There are now more than 700 studies looking at risks.....& more than **80% of the health studies document risks or actual harms**. It is also important to note that these **risks are likely to be seriously underestimated** because the **environmental agencies** have been **down playing the risks** to the public.

The oil & gas industry says that these health problems are not proven to be caused by fracking. This is partially trueespecially the agencies responsible have been

found to have actively hidden complaints or even failed to test the water of residents, as Public Herald reported

(Forbes article –pharma & Healthcare #public health - published Feb 23rd 2017- Fracking is dangerous to your health, here's why)

The above is from the USA, but more & more stories are emerging from Queensland, reporting similar corruption & incompetence within the Oil/gas industry & the Government & it's various agencies/departments.

It is of vital importance, if the government is going to allow this practice to occur within WA that there is "water tight" regulation, stringent, regular, structured & consistent monitoring of water & air quality during every step of the process, but this needs to be accompanied with swift & severe penalties for any breach or non compliance, no matter how minor. Extensive consultation, information sharing & involvement of the public in every aspect is imperative. Perhaps it would be a good idea to "employ" members of the public from each region to be trained & perform regular monitoring & testing of air & water on the sites within their locality?. Involvement of people who have a personal vested interest in ensuring water & air quality are maintained & specified "limits" aren't breached/exceeded, would go a long way towards ensuring that at least this monitoring is actually done & done properly.

But here lays the biggest issue. Who determines the "safe" maximum levels/limits, or "standards" of the vast array of "toxic chemicals" that are both used & created within the industry?. Bearing in mind that the water will continue to be drunk & the air will continue to be breathed, even at "low" Levels by that communities citizens, including infants, pregnant mothers, those with illnesses & disorders such as hypersensitivity & those prone to allergies. Chemicals known to cause cancer, premature births, asthma, depression & the list goes on.

Which Departments will/should be involved in deciding "**how much & of which poison is acceptable**" ? How can such a decision be made with little or no data & medical research done in this field? Particularly given ,that, in the U.S. where the greatest potential for leanings & research 'should" have taken place, any credible data has been hidden, manipulated & sabotaged by the very same oil/gas companies, government departments, "scientists" & environmental protection agencies that were empowered & entrusted to do the "right thing"

Once these decisions have been made, will these findings/figures, & details of the process of how they were reached be released to the public?

There is a **massive** body of work that needs to be done in this area, with consultation, deliberation & collaboration between many groups such as Health Department & other professionals within the medical field, Water Authority, Department of Water & Environmental Regulation, Dept of Mines Industry Regulation & Safety & there is no doubt many more.

This should be done **independently of any input from the oil & Gas industry.** Other than declaring **exactly** what products, chemicals etc are going to be used, the industry should have **no jurisdiction or influence** in determining the exposure limits, maximum safe levels, cut off points, test methods & procedures, best & accepted practices or any other data that this group is tasked to investigate & report/advise upon.

7. Pre-works **baseline Ground water levels must be recorded** at several locations within a pre-determined distance of all works/wells. This should be **done by the Water Authority (independently of the companies involved)** For the duration of all works, these levels are to be closely monitored at pre-determined intervals (ie monthly/quarterly?). **All works to halt immediately if reductions in these levels are detected.** Recovery rate of ground water to be determined once works have stopped & re-assessment of whether project is able to continue determined, based upon this recovery rate compared to projected water usage/wells remaining in the project
8. **Pre-works baseline Groundwater Quality tests must be conducted** (again, conducted independently by the Water Corporation) & recorded at several locations within a pre-determined distance of all works/wells. For the duration of all works the water quality is to be closely monitored at pre-determined intervals (ie monthly/Quarterly) **The exact key variables to be measured/monitored during these test is to be determined by** a collaboration between the following Departments; the **Water Authority, the Department of Water & Environmental Regulation & the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation & Safety** (formerly DMP). & also the **Health Department.** This is currently an area of concern as I have spoken to various people within these various departments & asked if they might be able to provide some key variables that I should test for in a both a baseline & in “post Fracking”/monitoring. (yes I intend to do testing on my own bore water quality to establish a base line) Most have been co-operative & said they will look into it & get back to me but none have yet been able to provide anything concrete. I tend to get the feeling that either a) **they do not have this data & have not put the groundwork into establishing exactly what to test for** or b) **there has been a directive not to release such information to the public. Ether way, this needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency before** any unconventional gas works in the field is allowed to continue. Given that companies are required to declare exactly what chemicals, fracturing fluids, drill foams,(surfactants etc) they are using & we know what gasses, elements & compounds are being extracted from the ground, so therefore it should be relatively easy to determine the key indicators/variable present/ not present in contaminated water. Testing/research & collaboration between the above mentioned departments **needs** be done to determine these key indicators of contamination & these **must** be made available to not only the Water Authority (who is the Key Stakeholder & legally responsible for ensuring the quality & health of all potable water supplies to regional communities) but also to the public, so that they can also conduct their own testing of water)
During a recent conversation with a spokesperson from **the Water Authority** I was advised that they **DO NOT have this data** & they need it to effectively monitor the water as part of their legal requirements. That, during their last meeting (which I am led to believe was during the Preliminary Inquiry on Implications of Hydraulic Fracturing for Western Australia, under the Barnett Government) **they were “disappointed & annoyed at being over-ruled by mining companies after raising these & other concerns”** & they have had no consultation since & are just waiting on the final report to see where they stand.

Only once this **urgent & vital** work has been completed & **key variables/indicators are established to satisfy all above mentioned stakeholders**, then the continual monitoring can begin, & as outlined in point 4. all works must cease if pre-determined test values are exceeded, once this relevant investigations & penalties applied & all key stakeholders, including those mentioned above in Point 1. shall be notified immediately.

9. To assist in **greater public confidence & ensure adequate sample size**, without the need to drill additional “Test/sample holes” any stakeholders (as mentioned in point 1,) should be given the **option to volunteer for testing/sampling of any bore holes on their private property at NO cost to them**. To prevent unnecessary costs of over- sampling this would be limited to a pre determined number of properties per km². The locations & test results shall be either displayed in an easily accessible & highly frequented public place for viewing or mailed to each household (stakeholder).

10. **Air monitoring** needs to be conducted **at all proposed sites, prior to works beginning**, to **establish a base line** of exact air conditions pre- Fracking. Then at **regular intervals** during **each stage of the process**, including **flaring**. Benzene, methane, formaldehyde, hydrogen sulphide & other known gasses need to be independently monitored & maximum limits set. As do the emissions being released from the toxic waste water ponds containing volatile organic compounds. The problem we find here is that once the well has been fracked, & the gasses have been artificially released from within the depths of the earth, how are these emissions quickly & effectively contained/controlled if maximum limits have been reached?

As an example, Please refer to article in US News entitled – Toxic Chemicals, Carcinogens Skyrocket Near Fracking sites Oct 30 2014

Eight poisonous Chemicals were found near wells & fracking sites in Arkansas, Colorado, Pennsylvania, Ohio & Wyoming at levels that far exceeded recommended Federal limits

I was amazed, Carpenter said, “Five orders of magnitude over Federal Limits for Benzene at one site- that’s just incredible

In summary, given the shady history, sheer number of variables & unknowns, the proven risks to Environment, water, air, communities, health & lack of any precedence demonstrating the safe & effective regulation & long term sustainability of the unconventional gas industry it would be a brave & foolish Government to knowingly expose its lands & people to the unpredictable nature of this industry.

Anyone who understands Fracking is opposed to it. If a person understands it & still supports it, then they must be gaining profit from it.

There is no “Grey Area” with Fracking.

There is nothing good about it.

There is no such thing as “safe” Fracking

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