

Frack Free Geelong
c/o Trades Hall
127 Myers Street, Geelong VIC 3220
frackfreegeelong@gmail.com
www.frackfreegeelong.org

27 January 2014

The Manager
Environment and Waste Services
City of Greater Geelong
P.O. Box 104
Geelong 3220

Dear Sir,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environment Management Strategy 2013-2017.

Frack Free Geelong would like to congratulate CoGG on the quality of its EMS and would like to make the following suggestions about it. We propose that the CoGG Environment Management Strategy:

1. expresses the Council of Greater Geelong's support for the continuation of the current moratorium in Victoria on gas exploration and operations; and
2. ensures that no gas mining will be allowed in Greater Geelong before a comprehensive investigation has been conducted into the likely effects of unconventional gas exploration and mining on public health, the environment, agriculture and food security, local communities and tourism.

Rationale

The State Government is currently considering a report on coal seam gas mining in Victoria. The report recommends support for coal seam gas mining, including hydraulic fracturing, proceeding in Victoria.

Currently, the state government has approved two unconventional gas explorations in the region – one for coal seam gas held by Western Victoria Energy Pty Ltd and one for tight gas held by Mirboo Ridge Pty Ltd (Lakes Oil).

In failing to regulate, the Council is essentially promoting new, high-risk fossil fuel extraction in Geelong region. This is a blow for Geelong citizens, for the environment, and for the Environment Management Strategy.

There are significant potential risks from coal seam gas, tight gas and shale gas mining, including adverse impacts on key industries like tourism and agriculture, public health and wellbeing implications and environmental implications, potential contamination of groundwater.

Unconventional gas mining is a matter of serious concern to communities in the region of Geelong. Community meetings on fracking have been held in Torquay on 1 October, Moriac on 13 November 2013, Deans Marsh on 25 November 2013 and in Geelong on 12 December 2013. A meeting is scheduled for 2 February in Apollo Bay, and meetings are also being planned in Armstrong Creek and Bellbrae.

These communities are preparing campaigns which will declaring themselves 'coal seam gas' free consistent with 'Lock the Gate' campaigns conducted in Queensland, New South Wales and Gippsland, and are establishing action plans should the gas mining companies start to explore in their area. (For more information on this, see www.frackfreegeelong.org).

While the concern of Geelong's citizens is to protect the city's aquifers, it is also about protecting the atmosphere from more pollution with greenhouse gases, and the climate change which is caused by this air pollution. Pushing ahead with gas extraction is a waste of effort and capital at a time when we need to be looking for ways to use less, not more fossil fuels.

It is actually very disturbing that exploration for gas mining has been allowed at all without any environmental impact assessments, clear separation distances and bans in environmentally-sensitive areas.

The Surf Coast Shire Council resolved on 22 August 2012 to call on the Victorian Government to institute a moratorium on all new coal seam gas exploration and operations until there had been a comprehensive investigation into the likely effects of the industry on the environment and local communities. This investigation has still not occurred. It is critical that a comprehensive investigation be conducted and the results shared with the public before the State Government gives any consideration to lifting the current moratorium.

Sincerely yours,
Elizabeth Packett

on behalf of
Frack Free Geelong
- a local community group
www.frackfreegeelong.org

Appendix

Farming for coal, gas

Letter to the Editor, 24 January 2014, in Geelong Independent:

Coal and coal seam gas exploration licences cover large areas to the west of Geelong, along the coast as far as Anglesea and Port Campbell and across the Bellarine Peninsula.

Farmers can be forced to permit companies to carry out exploration and, after obtaining the relevant licences, commence drilling, fracking or mining on their properties.

Coal seam gas extraction with associated fracking can result in water pollution, reduced water availability and salinity. The extraction process involves the use and transport of heavy equipment and many trucks. The large vehicles servicing drilling rigs, travel country roads frequently and can cause serious damage to roads.

Pipes traversing the paddocks can be a hazard.

These are problems frequently reported by farmers in New South Wales and Queensland. Valuable farmland might eventually be lost, causing reduced food production.

Farmers are becoming more concerned about the threat posed by coal seam gas and coal mining and are attending information meetings in country halls.

Perhaps our politicians are taking notice.

*Joan Lindros and Rod Clark
Geelong Environment Council*