

## Submission To the Gas Fracking Senate Enquiry



As West Australians we are writing to you to express our concerns about gas fracking and the industry's potential dire impacts on our water, land, health and environment.

We noticed you are representing Western Australians like us in your role as a Committee member on a Parliamentary Inquiry into this industry. We support this inquiry and would like you to consider our following concerns as part of your deliberations. We sincerely hope that this Senate inquiry into Gas Fracking is not merely a way to give this extremely dangerous and toxic industry a green light to increase operations.

Gas fracking places unacceptable risks on the environment, groundwater, pastoral land, air quality and public health and well being. For example:

1. One aspect of this industry that is of growing concern, yet disregarded by the EPA and rarely reported, is the associated air quality impacts. The generation of ozone chemicals has been highlighted overseas as a significant issue and agencies in the USA have taken regulatory action to address this. Ozone causes significant human health impacts at low levels and can travel long distances. As such, air quality also needs to be included in your examination of the industry.
2. Another risk area is water usage which includes toxic contamination as well as depletion of aquifers. We are the driest continent on earth yet it seems as if we are willing to waste and destroy this precious resource that all flora and fauna rely on for survival. In WA we are particularly reliant on groundwater for drinking and food production and groundwater contamination is irreversible. While existing and proposed gas fracking mines may not be in areas where drinking water is currently sourced, the scarcity of this resource, the impact of global warming and climate change together with our rapidly expanding population from both births and immigration (as well as increased longevity), means that many water sources not currently used will likely be required in the future. Once the ground and the water beneath it is poisoned, it is for all time, affecting not only increasing population and its requirement for drinking water, but also the means by which to feed us with both crops and livestock. The bottom line is that it is a toxic process that if used at all, **MUST** be extremely closely monitored at all sites. If this makes the process uneconomically viable - bonus as it should not be used in the first place - but monitoring is essential otherwise we risk irreparable damage to our future resources for a resource that can be sourced using other means

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and has a limited lifespan anyway. **Our current as well as our FUTURE water sources must be protected.**

3. Gas fracking causes large-scale disturbance of fragile ecosystems. This is an area under assault from many sources - population increases and urban sprawl, mining of huge areas of land and an ever-increasing toxic environment (air, land and water) resulting from the poisons we live with on a daily basis eg herbicides, insecticides, fertilisers and many more. We cannot afford to add another extremely damaging process to the list.
4. We have NO confidence in the WA government to properly manage the environment and health risks of gas fracking. Around the world environmental regulators have been captured by the powerful gas industry and it appears that this has already occurred in WA. The Government is strongly promoting gas fracking, but at the same time refusing community pleas to properly assess the environmental impacts. The cumulative impact on the environment, farm land, human health and the climate must be examined in a full public process before any further development occurs. The "puppet" department EPA is supposed to manage environmental risks. They have shown themselves to be both corrupt and inadequate as was very clearly demonstrated by the illegal and corrupt James Price Point approval. The very fact that the Department of Mines and Petroleum are responsible for monitoring and regulating the industry is a crystal clear conflict of interest.
5. Every single element used in the fracking process, toxic and non-toxic must be both declared AND publicised. We all have a right to know.
6. And how dare these companies trespass onto other people's land, cause life threatening irreparable damage then leave once they have depleted the resource they came for, leaving a trail of devastation behind them. Where are the BASIC civil rights of the average Western Australian - including those of the indigenous people? If fracking is permitted to continue, ALL national parks, nature reserves and state forests must be exempt from fracking, as well as all privately owned land.
7. We need to be developing clean energy sources for WA and capitalising on our natural advantages of clean, renewable energy of which we have abundant resources to choose from - solar, wind, tidal, geothermal.... Gas fracking does not produce clean fuel - there is mounting evidence that lifecycle carbon pollution from gas fracking is similar to burning coal. We cannot afford this massive additional contribution to climate change. The impacts of global warming and climate change have already begun. People are very slow in joining the dots and understanding what that means to us all as denial is the usual default position of most people. We are actually in crisis now as the damage already done by human activity has

commenced a cycle of destruction that is being nurtured not addressed. While there is life there is hope but this is rapidly diminishing. Government cannot just keep adding taxes to pay for the extreme weather events that have started and will continue to exacerbate. Government cannot continue to allow environmentally damaging industries to continue operate as they currently do. These industries must be phased out as a matter of urgency and NO new ones commenced such as gas fracking.

8. Monitoring of depleted wells/mines need to be ongoing - not time limited, as effects/contamination is permanent and long term and there would be many that take an extended time be make themselves apparent.
9. There needs to be compensation packages from both the government and the fracking companies given to the public as the poison spreads through the ground water systems and destroys land productivity and viability. For the farmers who's land becomes toxic and infertile and useless for crops or for grazing. And for the people inadvertently poisoned through contact/ingestion (on top of the hidden health care, lost work, emotional and social costs etc). There is no compensation for lost species as they are defenceless which is why so many are dying out every day and our fragile eco-systems are disappearing. The public is becoming less ignorant and less apathetic and will begin to litigate.

Western Australia's water and land is vital to our health, our lifestyle and our economy. Gas fracking is not worth the risk - the costs are too high and unacceptable. IT MUST BE STOPPED. The costs in terms of damage to water resources alone is unacceptable, let alone all of the other negative impacts.

For the government to represent the wishes of the public AND act in their best interests, gas fracking must be outlawed for all time immediately.

Sincerely

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