



18th September 2013

Ms Margaret Liveris
Committee Clerk
Standing Committee on Environmental and Public Affairs
Legislative Council
Parliament House
GPO Box A11
Perth WA, 6837

To Ms Liveris,

RE: Proposed hydraulic fracturing in the Mid West.

I am writing this as a concerned parent, farmer and teacher who has been living in Australia for my entire life. Growing up I have always taken for granted the freedom and relative cleanliness of this amazing country we are all so fortunate to live in. It has never occurred to me before how little I have done to preserve such privileges for the future. Since becoming a mother 12 months ago I realised just how precious life is and how important it is to preserve our amazing land and resources for those we leave behind. This may all sound a little cliché but ultimately is the foundation for which we should make EVERY decision.

Our new Prime Minister Tony Abbott declares that he will “Help to build a stronger Australia and a better future – for all Australians.” How can we build a stronger Australia if we continue to make the same mistakes over and over? Can’t we all see that non-renewable resources are limited in that they only provide a “band-aid” solution to what is an ongoing problem? Yes, it may provide us with an increased ability to generate electricity, more job opportunities across a small number of sectors and minor royalty payments for property owners, but these are all frivolous when placed beside the bigger picture solutions renewable energy resources provide.

As a child growing up I was always taught that our water is precious and one of, if not the most, valuable resource we have. So why is it now that we are choosing to destroy what we should be protecting? The Water Corporation of WA’s plan to drought proof our water supplies by 2022 involves sourcing a greater amount of our water (50%) from the ground. If we sit by and let companies and our government carry out hydraulic fracturing to extract gas from rocks beneath the ground we are willingly giving away our access to clean drinking water. Fracking not only uses extremely high quantities of WA’s already limited water supply to shatter rocks and release the trapped gas, it produces a high risk of pollution to surface and ground water (see, e.g., the 2012 European Commission report on shale fracking, or the US EPA’s report on pollution at Pavillion, Wyoming). We may be told that the way fracking is carried out is safe and there is minimal risk of contamination but MINIMAL is not good enough.

Farming in Australia affects every single one of us. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics agriculture generates up to \$43 billion in gross value each year. It employs around 370, 000 people across Australia and takes up around 60% of all the land in Australia (Australian Government article on Agriculture in Australia). These statistics show that farmers contribute greatly to the Australian economy. As one of these farmers I am concerned with the current legislation that states landholders have no

rights to prevent development on their own land. Now we not only have to work at the mercy of the climate but have no choice but to succumb to the demands of gas fracking companies as they carry out research and possibly even drill for gas on our valued land. Not only is farming important economically for Australia, it serves great cultural importance too. Many tourists travel to Australia to experience our unique lifestyle and environment. If we allow wells to be placed all over our region our environment will no longer provide the experience so many travel to see.

Above all of this what I struggle to understand is the constant push to put so much belief and momentum behind non-renewable energy sources. As a teacher I explain to my students that mistakes are often the best way of learning. How can this lesson not be understood by some of the most influential people in our country? With knowledge comes wisdom. There are so many other options available to us here in Australia. We have natural resources all around us but we are, for whatever reasons, choosing not to go there. My fear is that by the time our little girl is my age we will be in an even greater state of panic as we go about developing new ways of making energy.

Australian deserts occupy around 44% of our entire continent. To me this provides an amazing opportunity for research and development in the area of solar power. Industry experts predict that if the pace of growth continues, by 2050 the answer to one third of the world's electricity needs will be found blowing in the wind (National Geographic), so why aren't we putting more of our energy into wind power? I realise that our country is not completely ruling out renewable energy nor researching ways to implement it in the future. I do, however, believe that fracking is not a good short term solution as it proves to pose worrying risks.

We are regarded by others as the "lucky country" and we are becoming so greedy many of us don't realise we will soon be regarded by others as the "broken country". I am asking you to think about our future, the future of our children. Let's leave them with a country they can not only enjoy but truly believe in.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Aimee Carson

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