



I am delighted that there is a chance to submit to an enquiry into the unconventional gas industry in WA.

As a citizen of the Midwest, WA I am worried by the exploration and drilling of unconventional oil and gas resources in WA. The only way it seems money can be made from this process is by drilling fast and often and exporting the product to other energy hungry nations. The news from the USA and Europe is that wells decline in productivity exponentially and extraction methods are so expensive that only very high oil prices around the world can justify the drilling.

At the moment a consortium of energy companies is drilling near Dongara. The Conservation Council has calculated – based on existing onshore unconventional gas fields - that we can expect an explosion of approximately 25,000 wells across the Midwest to exploit this resource. Even if this figure is miscalculated by thousands we are looking at a massive industrialisation of the land as it is crisscrossed by service roads and truck laybys, scarred by pipes, well heads and toxic surface sludge ponds.

Every well will punch through the aquifer that supports all life between Perth and Geraldton and that's where they will remain – for the 3 to 15 years of well operation and during the ' forever after' of their decommissioned state. There is potential for steel pipes to rust and cement casings to crack at all points during this time which can result in the release of methane and toxic chemicals into our water system as well as leaching from the surface waste ponds into air and ground. The process of fracturing itself uses enormous amounts of fresh water.

*This means that we are trading short term energy gains that will leave us with enormous environmental impacts including definitely, the industrialisation of the land and, potentially, toxic water and air.*

It will be hard to convince an informed citizenry that the DMP (Dept of Minerals and Petroleum) and the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) will ever have the resources to properly monitor the quantity of wells that need to be drilled to make it worth the petroleum companies' investment.). Especially as it appears that even the simple *precautionary principle* that common sense science suggests should be applied to test the effects of the chemicals used in fracking on the environment, animal and human life does not seem to be being applied in the rush to help exploit this suspect energy source.

*If the DMP had the commitment and power required to force the mining bodies to clean up after abandoned wells and the mining activities rendered the groundwater unusable, what possible clean-up job could they do? Subsidise us to all have water tanks that they filled from another part of this water-starved state?*

I have listened to the spokesperson from APPEA telling us that there has never been a case proven that unconventional gas horizontal fracking has damaged an aquifer. This ' truth' might be based on the fact that mining was allowed before baseline tests were done to establish the actual conditions of the underground water. When there is nothing to compare water quality to before and after (except the anecdotal evidence of the citizens affected) then whatever the miners leave us with is uncontestably and legally, what is. This seems to be what has happened in parts of Queensland as the Government joined forces with mining companies to fast track Coal Seam mining

And there is always the question of who gets the money? The energy companies of course, and as margins are apparently pretty thin, they will only get the big bucks if they don't have to pay for the environmental damage they leave behind.

There is also a bigger point about the figures that APPEA are showing us about the huge reserves that we – and our aquifers - are sitting on. Even if the drilling went ahead and we could all continue the petroleum party for another couple of decades where does that leave us in terms of global warming?

We all know it is time for a very careful weighing of the balance between environmental damage and energy use that the extraction and use of hard-to-get-at fossil fuel represents. As a citizen concerned for farmers, land for growing food on and our precious water I request that our aquifers take precedence over any mining procedures and that a lot more testing is done to prove conclusively that our water is kept safe for the future and that our farmers have a right to grow food unmolested by mining demands for water and land.

Regards

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