

Ms Margaret Liveris,  
Committee Clerk,  
Standing Committee Environment and Public Affairs  
Legislative Council,  
Parliament House,  
GPO Box A11  
PERTH WA 6837

Dear Ms Leveris,

Re: Submission for the Fracking Enquiry

I was born in 1952 and this is the first time I have felt strongly enough to respond to a Parliamentary enquiry. Water is such a precious commodity and we have lived our working life on our farm always mindful and respectful of water.

With all that we are hearing about fracking and the information being passed on by organisations, such as Lock the Gate Alliance, we are extremely concerned about our future. Not just for us as farmers but for all people in our region. We all need quality water to survive and flourish.

I marvel at how much individuals now spend on purchasing commercial drinking water because they do not like the taste, or do not feel safe drinking scheme water. Already our drinking water is under question and now we learn that fracking is going to be allowed in our area.

We have a responsibility to our future generation to ensure we keep our environment as clean as possible.

Below is a list of my concerns for this enquiry.

1. This enquiry is not broad enough

- There is no reference to the risk of contamination to groundwater. I do not have a science background however why would the government not include this crucial reference?

## 2. The enquiry has not given the public enough time to submit submissions.

The enquiry was announced just before the federal election. People are election weary and need more time to respond to this submission.

August and September is a very busy time for rural communities, with agriculture expos, local agriculture shows, maintenance of crops, shearing or crutching for blow fly control and the start of the prime lamb selling time.

More time is needed for land holders to fully understand the impact of fracking and the time to then prepare a submission.

## 3. Loss of Trust.

Because of the above time frame one feels that this enquiry will simply be a white wash.

A political commentator stated, "Labour spends and Liberal hordes". We all know that the country is carrying a massive debt and that both the Federal and WA State Liberals will be out to reduce the debt, however at what cost to the people and our country.

For the first time ever, we voted because that was the only political party we trusted with their stance on Fracking. A protest vote, normally we would vote Nationals.

Already we know not to trust the gas companies. They have recently been in our area doing seismic testing, unannounced. Our neighbour stopped a truck, asking the crew what they were doing in our area. We felt like we had been raided by "ships in the night". No consultation, no information, no fore warning of the activity. All the measuring near us was done from the public road system.

People are voicing concern that this enquiry is simply going to bog down, drag on and fail to give any protection to what is already developing here in our region. Again this demonstrates a lack of trust within the community in a government process.

## 4. Freedom of Speech

On contacting various Government Departments enquiring what their view and stance was on fracking, I was repeatedly informed, "That they did not have a policy on it and cannot make a comment". This seems very unusual when they are government departments in control of protecting our water, land and agricultural sector. Why are these government departments not allowed to have a view?

## 5. Water Protection

As farmers we are very concerned about the threat to the contamination of our water, both surface and ground. We are also concerned about the huge quantity of water that is required to frack a gas well and the risk this possess to our water levels. We are totally dependent on bore water to get our farming operation through the summer months.

In Canberra there is a display by CSIRO predicting the invasion of salinity into the wheatbelt areas in the future in relation to past land clearing. They explain the destruction this will bring to rural communities of roads, buildings, underground infrastructure plus the loss of flora and fauna; destruction by saline water to many services to communities.

My understanding is that, with the lowering of our water table by fracking, that saline water will move in from the coast line to fill the natural level. This is a threat not included in the CSIRO display.

A hydrologist explained, at a field day in Dandaragan, that the water that comes up at Dandarga Springs, had been tested and it showed scientific evidence that it had travelled underground from the Kimberley Region. Microscopic samples in the water were millions of years old and were finger printed from the Kimberley region; hence with underground water moving so slow and so far, how will we know that contamination is occurring until it is too late for our future generations. This scientific model demonstrates that the planned fracking for the Kimberly region will impact on our region, thousands of miles away and of course in thousands of years' time. We have a responsibility to listen to our environmental scientists and protect our natural resources.

## 6. Air Pollution

We understand that the fracking development will not be one well, but many wells, connected by underground pipes leading into a main pipe. This will create a network covering our landscape, with an evaporation pond at each well. With prevailing winds we are concerned at the health effects on both humans and animals.

## 7. Soil Pollution

With extreme weather and human error, how can the gas companies guarantee land holders that soil contamination will not occur from the evaporation ponds, should such situations arise. Who will be responsible for the clean-up and who pays the bill?

## 8. Local Infrastructure

Already we have witnessed the mess the seismic trucks made to our gravel roads during our winter. What we have experienced is only a fraction of the traffic we will be experiencing if the industry proceeds. This brings up who bears the cost of repairs to the roads? Highly likely the tax payer and not the mining company.

There is also a road safety factor for our volunteers of emergency services and the impact to general local traffic and tourist traffic.

## 9. Different Standards/Rules for landholders to Coal and Gas Companies

We personally know of a local farmer who was taken to court and heavily fined for clearing native vegetation to allow a super spreader to travel through his regrowth bush paddock to enable the spreading of fertilizer. The court action almost broke him financially and caused untold stress to him and his family. Gas companies can clear where ever they want. No restrictions for gas companies, definitely double standards by government departments.

## 10. Increased Stress to Rural Communities

Rural communities were abandoned by governing parties some twenty years ago, coinciding with the mining boom. A two speed economy has developed with prices for primary producers' not lifting and keeping pace with rising costs.

One example, we cannot compete with the mining industry for wages, resulting in few skilled people available for employment in the farming industry in our area. Most of our shearers and tractor drivers are now sourced from New Zealand because our previous source of local labour are now employed in the mining industry where they can get higher wages.

The FIFO/shift working system has destroyed the fabric of many rural communities with sporting, cultural and emergency services demonstrating this fact with decreasing numbers and attendances. The traditional weekend of meeting and socialising is no longer the norm. Clubs struggle to be viable, clubs are an important structure for social interaction and mental health.

Regional areas have the highest suicide rate in the country and with the threat of fracking encroaching into our region this will bring another stress to farmers, supporting industries and communities who are already feeling overwhelmed and under resourced.

## 11. Foreign Ownership

We already pay a high price for natural gas compared to other countries however we have huge reserves of gas which should belong to the people of our country to benefit our people, not to be raped and pillaged by overseas interests who leave when they are finished; leaving who to clean up?

## 12. Threat to Local Tourism

We have a unique landscape with amazing flora and fauna, recognised by world scientist as a biodiversity hot spot of the world. Why would we want to risk this natural beauty and developing tourist attraction? Nature based tourism is a sustainable industry with good ethics and governance, unlike the gas industry.

Again the increased traffic from fracking will be a detracting and threat to road safety.

### 13. Misinformation/Half Truths in the Media

Both gas companies and government departments are on record for the above, causing a lot of confusion within the general public. Who do you believe? Who do you trust for correct information?

Where are independent scientists gathering baseline data prior to fracking starting in our area? Who do we trust for measuring and recording data when something goes wrong with a fracking procedure?

How will a ground water be cleaned should it be contaminated?

Who will carry the cost of this repair?

Is there an engineer in the world who is prepared to put their name to guarantee that a fracked well will not contaminate now and into the future once it has been capped and made redundant?

Thank you for this opportunity for this enquiry. I can assure the committee that there are many people who feel just as I do and who do not have the energy, time, health or resource to put together a submission. Once people hear about fracking and understand the process become very alarmed about the possible harm to our natural resources and to our health.

I am a cancer statistic in our region and often it is pondered within our community as to why we have such a high rate of cancer for our small population here at Dandaragan. Is it the increase use of chemicals within our farming practises? Is it because we live in country where mineral sand is mined? Is it because of the industrialisation of our food chain; too much processing, too many additives? The list of questions goes on, too many to list.

When will governments start to listen to their people and place a value on health and welfare and stop enslaving us to consumerism and a throw-away society and overseas multinationals that seem hell bent on destroying our planet?

Please protect our environment and our people with this enquiry.

Yours faithfully

Christine & Kingsley Smith  
Farmers & Landholder