

# Submission to the Inquiry into the Implications for Western Australia of Hydraulic Fracturing for Unconventional Gas

By Farida Iqbal

## Introduction

I am opposed to hydraulic fracturing (fracking) in Western Australia for many reasons. After everything that has happened in the United States and Queensland, I don't trust these people or any of their methods. I hope we can send fracking packin. I hope we can drive them out of town, just like we did with the James Price Point gas hub and the Vasse Coal project.

Mining and petroleum companies have no right to put people's health, safety and livelihoods at risk and lie through their teeth about it. Mining and petroleum companies think that they can just stomp all over rural people as if they're nobody. The rights of people and the environment must be respected.

There is no reason why hard working farmers and ordinary people should care one bit about the concerns of petroleum industry CEOs. I'm not at all persuaded by the industry spin that fracking provides jobs. It's all just to make a quick profit. Fracking threatens far more jobs than it potentially provides.

A fracking industry will develop in WA over my dead body.

I address the Inquiry's terms of reference as follows:

- a) how hydraulic fracturing may impact on current and future uses of land;

Above all, the committee conducting this inquiry needs to understand that people love the land where they live. Love is something that never enters into the profit and loss statements of fracking companies. It is also coldly ignored in government policy. But it is real and it is something people will fight for, tooth and nail.

People love the South West, the Mid West, the Gascoyne and the Kimberley. It's their home. People were born there. Some families have been living there for generations. People have farmed that land and cared for that land. When they have faced hardships in life, people have found solace in its natural beauty. Its environmental integrity has cradled life itself.

The relationship between Aboriginal people and the land must be much deeper than I can imagine. This is a relationship that stretches back at least forty thousand years, and isn't only about a home and a livelihood. It's also about religion. I understand that the water ways of Western Australia are sacred to the Wardandi, Yamatji, Inggarda, Martu and the peoples of the Kimberley.

The land can't just be viewed coldly in terms of "use", as if it is just there to be exploited. The land must be understood in terms of love; in terms of the ongoing relationships between people and their environment.

When the land is understood in terms of love, it is clear that fracking is a reprehensible practice. Fracking companies have no love for the land. I've seen their maps of WA. Fracking companies couldn't care less that Australia is a land with people, culture and a living ecology. On their maps, fracking companies only show shale and tight sand formations, exploration leases and production licences. It is offensive to the people living there that these leases cover whole towns like Kwinana, Jurien Bay, Gingin, Margaret River and Busselton.

The disdain that fracking companies hold for the land is demonstrated by their environmental destruction. I'm sure that issues like aquifer contamination, well casing failure, migration of frack fluid through

underground fault systems, climate change, land clearing and the degradation of forests and farmland are covered well enough in other submissions. Another issue is the fire hazard. In rural areas people are very careful about fire, and with good reason. Out of control bush fires destroy the land and are terrifying to people. This is why everybody has to make sure their fire breaks are prepared in time for summer. People who volunteer as fire fighters are respected by the whole community. And where my family live, if somebody lets their grass grow too long they have to face the community's judgement. In my opinion, fracking companies should be subjected to that judgement too.

Fugitive emissions are a major problem with frack wells. Not many wells have been fracked in WA so far, but it is a very bad sign that the Corybas well in the Midwest is already leaking. It is disgusting that fracking companies leak methane gas all over fire prone areas, placing the land and people's lives at risk.

b) the regulation of chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing process;

The chemicals used in fracking are too dangerous. Regulating them isn't enough. Fracking should be banned, or at least there should be a moratorium placed on it until it is proven that it can be done safely (which in my opinion will probably be never). Here is a poem I wrote about it:

We don't want your ethyl benzene  
We don't want your fracking frenzy  
We don't want your ethyl glycol  
Messing up our water cycle.  
WA is not for shale  
We're gonna fight you tooth and nail

c) the use of ground water in the hydraulic fracturing process and the potential for recycling of produced water.

WA is dry. We all know that. We're all conscious about not letting the tap run, and about respecting lawn watering restrictions. Farmers depend on the Leederville and Yarragadee aquifers for their livelihoods. Fracking companies have no right to waste millions of litres of ground water in WA. It's too dry here and it's needed for more important things, like drinking water and the food supply.

Recycling produced water sounds equally stupid as wasting fresh water, but for different reasons. It isn't possible to remove all the toxins from produced water. So if produced water is reused for more fracking, this means fracking with already contaminated water. Surely this must increase the risk of aquifer contamination.

The industry is wasting everyone's time trying to make fracking look environmentally friendly by using the word "recycling". We're not stupid. I think it's much better to just ban it and invest in renewable energy instead.

d) the reclamation (rehabilitation) of land that has been hydraulically fractured.

I am not convinced that fracked land can be rehabilitated. It isn't possible to fix a broken aquifer, or extract all the toxins from a poisoned ecosystem. Halliburton should just go home. They're not welcome here.

Signature:

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