

Adriana Pracas

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## **SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE IMPLICATIONS FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA OF HYDRAULIC FRACTURING FOR UNCONVENTIONAL GAS**

I am a Senior School Teacher and an active volunteer with the Australian Youth Climate Coalition. I am highly concerned about the possibility of hydraulic fracturing in Western Australia and am calling for broadened Terms of Reference as well as addressing the existing Terms of Reference of this enquiry.

### **Call for Broadened Terms of Reference**

The current terms of reference for this inquiry are too narrow and need to reflect the key risks of the industry. It is extremely important that the terms of reference are expanded to encompass the range of negative impacts on the health of West Australians and the environment.

#### **1. The cumulative impact**

A well-by-well assessment is an inadequate measure of the industry's impact. A gasfield comprises several thousand wells and it is imperative that the cumulative impact of those wells on the environment, farm land and human health should be considered.

#### **2. Air pollution needs to be covered under the terms of reference of the inquiry**

The European Commission report found that there is a cumulatively high risk of air pollution from gas fracking which has been documented to increase the risk of cancers such as leukemia, asthma and impacts to the nervous system.

#### **3. The potential for human health impacts**

There are serious health risks associated with hydraulic fracturing, whether it is from the chemicals used, to the fugitive emissions and air pollution, to the contamination of ground water caused by fracturing.

#### **4. An appropriate regulatory body is needed**

I do not believe the Department of Mines and Petroleum is an appropriate body to ensure the protection of Western Australia's environment when it is also tasked with promoting the fracking industry.

#### **5. Climate change impacts that flow from fugitive emissions need to be considered**

Comparatively, natural gas has an impact on climate change that is 20 times greater than Carbon Dioxide, and as fugitive emissions are always present, the effect on climate change needs to be considered.

### **Addressing the existing Terms of Reference**

#### **Term of Reference 1 – How hydraulic fracturing may impact on current and future uses of land**

I oppose the denial of landowners rights. Landowners should be able to refuse and prevent gas fracking activity on their land.

I am strongly opposed to shale gas fracking companies being permitted to frack in nature reserves and other areas of our conservation estate. It is important for these areas to be preserved and should be completely off limits.

The inquiry needs to determine who will have liability for abandoned sites after well abandonment. Once these wells have been dug, they are a permanent part of the landscape. Every single well, in time, will crack, leading to possible fugitive emissions and ground water contamination. Who will be liable for these consequences?

**Term of Reference 2 – The regulation of chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing process**

No dangerous pollutants should be pumped through our aquifers and laws should ensure that all fracking chemicals are completely safe. I am also concerned with how a range of dangerous contaminants are released from shale or tight stone by fracking, which have the potential to contaminate ground or surface water.

**Term of Reference 3 – The use of ground water in the hydraulic fracturing process and the potential for recycling ground water**

Each frack uses up to 30 million litres of water. The gains from hydraulic fracturing do not justify the overuse of groundwater, which will deplete aquifers, in such a dry state.

**Term of Reference 4 – The reclamation (rehabilitation) of land that has been hydraulically fractured**

How exactly will the land be rehabilitated? I am opposed seeing our Mid West and Kimberley riddled with wells. How is the industry going to safely dispose of the chemicals used? Evaporative techniques lead to contamination through the air. Who will be liable for contamination of water that occurs after a well has been abandoned?

Hydraulic fracturing destroys the natural landscape and poses serious risks to our groundwater and the health of Australians. I am strongly opposed to this method of gas mining occurring in Western Australia. The cumulative negative impacts, the health risks, and identifying who will be responsible for those wells in 100 years, all need to be investigated and addressed before this industry continues.

Regards

Adriana Pracas