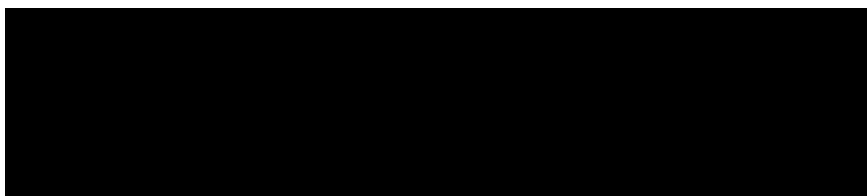


Western Regional Coastal Development Plan 2015-2020 (Draft)

Feedback From-



ORGANISATION: the Warrnambool 'Unfrackabools'



Please note our responses to the questions, highlighted in green, are from the Regional Coastal Plans document

1. The draft plan identifies a range of environmental, social and economic values that are important in the Western Coastal region. Are these the most important values? Is there anything you think is missing?

It is encouraging to note that the vision for the western regional coastal plan (draft) includes the protection and promotion of biodiversity and sustainable development throughout the region based upon projected population growth patterns, cultural, environmental and socio-economic values.

Two additional areas that we feel should be given consideration are education and human health. Both certainly influence the capacity for administrators, councils, boards and the general community to make appropriate choices to sustain coastal environments. If the board felt that education and population health could not be listed as separate values they could be included under the current heading of economic value. It has been noted in the literature by authors such as Humphreys and Gregory (2012) that human health should be viewed as an investment given that the capacity for appropriate decision making and workforce productivity extend well beyond the health care system. Education of course underpins the very fabric of our society and dominates all human activity. All community members should have an opportunity to be informed about the consequences of unconventional natural gas mining/fracking as both their health and quality of life will be affected if water and soil pollution occurs through unsafe mining practices. We feel that the Western Coastal Board should take a leading role in reviewing the current and proposed mining practices to ascertain their effects on the coastal ecosystem.

2. The draft identifies several important issues affecting the coast in this region. Some of these are the same issues that affect the whole state, while others are particularly

important in this region. Do you think these are the most important issues affecting the region? What other issues do you think are important in this region?

In addition to the priorities listed in the document, one of the most important issues for our coastal region is the quest for finite fossil fuels to provide affordable, environmentally friendly energy for both the domestic and international markets. However we feel mining for oil and gas has the potential to destroy the other economic, environmental, social and cultural aspects of our communities that have been mentioned in the draft document. It should be noted that current costs to human health from fossil fuels in Australia has been estimated at \$ 5.9 billion annually (Thoms 2014).

Briefly, many studies have indicated that Unconventional Natural Gas Mining (UNGM) or fracking is particularly hazardous to the health of humans, domestic animals and wild life both on land and in the water (Bamberger & Oswald 2014; Colburn et al 2014; Mitka 2012; Mondon 2014; Redenbach 2015). Legislative polices have not kept pace with the technology (Lloyd-Smith & Senjen 2011), the boundaries of safe practices are imprecise (Brahic 2015), and there is a lack of transparency by the petroleum industries (de Chelaid, 2014). It should be noted that 83% of the petroleum companies are in foreign ownership, whilst employing only 0.2% of the working population (Ogge 2014) and long term health issues are hardly of major concern to these companies. In addition the federal government continues to provide subsidies (more than \$10 billion) to the fossil fuel industries which is twice that spent on government schools (environmetnvictoria.org.au/fossilfuelsubsidies 2015).

Summary of concerns related to UNGM:

- environmental damage leading to air, water and soil contamination ---> undesirable pollutants such as methane entering the atmosphere accelerating climate change; chemicals such as arsenic, cadmium and benzene related compounds with carcinogenic properties used in the fracking processes entering our food chain, and the treatment of flow back from the drilling site can lead to disastrous consequences for human, domestic animal and wild life well-being;
- lack of transparency by the petroleum companies (commercial secrecy) and a poor history of best practices;
- underdeveloped legislation and government enforcement related to chemical usage in drilling and waste water management, leakages of casings and site rehabilitation;
- foreign ownership... the real economic benefits to the local communities are questionable and at best very short termed;
- proposed exploration and mining of UNGM is huge and has been reported that 53% of Australia is being mined and/or under consideration for exploration (Redenback, 2015). Landholders are asking who will bear the consequences of UNGM should adverse events occur? To date there have been several environmental incidents in Australia related to UNMG and there is little visible evidence of the governments

(state and federal) taking adequate action to protect our valuable agricultural sector and water resources. It should be noted that the exceptions to the above statement are the states of Tasmania and Victoria. Both states have placed a moratorium on UNGM. However in Victoria the moratorium could well be reversed by the current state government. Both the premier and the minister for energy and resources have been very silent on this issue.

3. The draft plan identifies a range of actions that could be implemented to better manage the coast of this region. These regional-scale actions are intended to complement action by others at the state wide level and the local level, so they are not comprehensive and don't duplicate the good work that others are already doing. Are these the right actions needed to address the important coastal issues in this region? What other actions could the plans propose that could address these issues?

There is considerable evidence which indicates that there are still many contentious issues that need to be addressed before UNGM can be said to be 'safe and reliable' (Redmond, 2011). It has been noted that WCB and DELWP are expected to form partnerships and engage in regular discussions with other agencies such as the local councils, traditional owners, and catchment management authorities etc. In the discourse with these other agencies we would encourage the WCB and the DELWP to support the moratorium on unconventional natural gas mining (UNGM) **UNTIL** it has been shown, through independent scientific studies that:

- UNGM is safe and will not harm our environments;
- there are mechanisms in place to ensure best practices by the petroleum companies;
- the petroleum industry be required to state what compensation will be provided to the land holders/communities should an adverse event occur prior to beginning to explore and/or drill for gas and oil;
- the petroleum companies in conjunction with government authorities, as part of their licence agreements, be required to gathered data from soil, water and air samples around the drilling site (before, during and after drilling) and make these findings available to public.

4. Is there anything else that you think we should consider in revising the draft plan?

1. We would hope that the WCB would continue to promote the strengths of the region such as the agriculture, tourism, health and educational sectors of our communities in addition to advancing the use of renewal energy sources.

2. That WCB provide regular opportunities for general community meetings to inform and share valued information about our coastal regional developments, preferably in open public forums.

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