

# Creating an Industrial Gasfield in the Wide Bay Burnett threatens our land & water resources – vs 6 Nov 18

## HELP PROTECT OUR WATER SOURCES!

### Background

Prime agricultural land in the Wide Bay-Burnett region is covered by 3,000 km<sup>2</sup> of gas exploration licenses, held by mining company, Blue Energy Ltd. The permits include the townships of Bundaberg and Childers, the coastal communities of Woodgate and Hervey Bay and parts of Bargara and Maryborough.

These licenses are due for renewal in December 2018 and March 2019. Exploration, and potential production, of shale gas could seriously and permanently damage our region's sources of clean water.

A recent report has detailed the potential impacts of a shale gas industry on the land and water resources of the Wide Bay Burnett region. It highlights the very real threat to our water sources and our 'Clean & Green' brand<sup>1</sup>.

A second report on the economic impact of gasfields in farming regions indicates that for every 10 jobs created by the gas industry, 18 farming jobs are lost, along with a 7% reduction in agricultural output<sup>2</sup>.

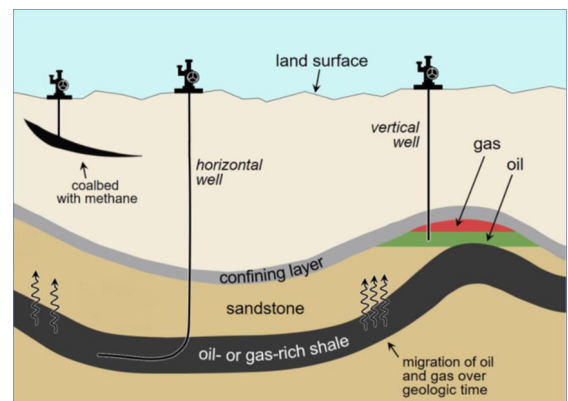
### How the Gas is Brought to the Surface

The gas is located deep below the aquifers from which we draw our water, so any gas well has to be drilled through the aquifers.

To get the gas to the surface, large volumes of water mixed with fine sand and a range of toxic chemicals are injected at great pressure into the coal or shale seams, through a process called hydraulic fracturing. Each well may have to be fracked up multiple times during its (limited) useful life.

Hydraulic fracturing in the Coastal Wide Bay Burnett Region could require up to 26,700ML of water for a single fracking of 100 shale gas well pads<sup>1</sup>. The likely source of this water is currently unknown. If a Coastal Wide Bay Burnett shale gas industry was to access its projected water use of 26,700ML/yr. from aquifers utilized for agriculture, it could have serious implications on the "announced take" of groundwater by agriculture in the region.

In Queensland, Mining and Petroleum & Gas leaseholders have the right to take unlimited volumes of "associated groundwater" during their development and production.



The hydraulic fracturing of gas wells presents serious risks to underground water quality, surface water quality, human health and the environment. In the USA, industry documents show that 6% of wells fail immediately and 60% fail over 20 years. If wells fail, gas and contaminants can find pathways into aquifers and surface water. This is happening on the Darling Downs. The toxic "flow back" fluids, which are a critical part of the process, are stored in open ponds and tanks<sup>1</sup>. There is no known way of making this brew safe. Eventually plastic liners deteriorate, while storage overflow is an annual risk in our cyclone prone Region.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bfv.com.au/publications/a-report-on-the-impacts-on-surface-water-groundwater-resources>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.tai.org.au/content/gas-and-wide-bay-burnett-economy>

## Claimed Benefits

When applying for licences, gas companies have made many claims of 'Benefits-To-Come'. These included promises of more employment, higher wages, local economic growth, huge royalties to State Government Treasuries and lower prices or higher energy security for Australian gas-consumers.

The reality is vastly different:-

- **Reduced Employment:** for every 10 jobs created in the gas industry, 18 were lost in agriculture<sup>2</sup>. In the Wide Bay Burnett Region, this loss of jobs from agriculture is likely to be a lot higher, given our labour intensive rural industries.
- **Boom Bust Cycle:** resulting from higher wages during construction, a spike in rent for housing for temporary workers, and departure of many long-term local residents and some businesses who could no longer compete<sup>2</sup>. The really well-paid construction jobs have moved on since.
- **Community Disenchantment:** surveys in gas boomtowns show that only 6% of residents believe that the gas industry changed the community for the better<sup>2</sup>.
- **Reduced Economic Growth:** a reduction of 7% on agricultural land with gaswells<sup>2</sup> offset any economic stimulation created by the gas activities. Given the very high value of production per hectare in the Wide Bay Burnett Region, this loss of income is likely to be much higher.
- **Poor Government Royalties Generated:** the forecast royalties for 2016 were to be around \$561 million. But the actual royalties were only \$33.7 million or 6% of the forecast<sup>2</sup>.
- **Extracted Gas is Exported**<sup>2</sup>: Overseas customers benefit from the gas, not Australians.

## Threats Beyond Agriculture

There are well-documented threats to the health of people living near wells, pump stations and storage ponds. Children are especially vulnerable.

The main threat beyond agriculture is through spillage of toxic waste into creeks, rivers and the ocean and thus to fisheries and tourism. They too depend on clean, unpolluted water for their survival.

Tourism is a major regional employer and contributor to the economy. The impact of any potential damage to our coastal waters from the Town of 1770 to Double Bay Point, the Great Barrier Reef, the Great Sandy Marine Park and Fraser Island is beyond calculation.

## What can we do?

- ✓ Let the DNR&M Minister and Blue Energy know that the Wide Bay-Burnett region does not welcome a gas industry with this email <https://lockthegate.good.do/protectwbb/protectwbb/>.
- ✓ Keep informed of the issues by following [www.facebook.com/widebayfarming](http://www.facebook.com/widebayfarming).
- ✓ Join the Gasfield Free Wide Bay Burnett mailing list by emailing [gasfieldfreewbb@gmail.com](mailto:gasfieldfreewbb@gmail.com) with the subject 'Please add me'.
- ✓ Join Lock the Gate and offer financial support to the campaign to protect the Wide Bay Burnett [https://www.lockthegate.org.au/join\\_us](https://www.lockthegate.org.au/join_us) and make a donation at [https://www.lockthegate.org.au/donate\\_one\\_off](https://www.lockthegate.org.au/donate_one_off).