

Media release

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CSG not worth risk to health & environment

Health and climate impacts suggest unconventional gas is not the best option for Australia's energy future, according to research released today.

The research paper *Is fracking good for your health?* is co-published by The Australia Institute and The Social Justice Initiative. It examines existing research to analyse the impacts of unconventional gas – coal seam gas (CSG), shale gas and tight gas - on health and climate.

It finds that unconventional gas should not be endorsed from an environmental and human health perspective and describes the current case against further expansion of the industry as overwhelming.

“Australia is facing a crucial decade when it comes to energy choices. Our current reliance on coal is unsustainable, so the gas industry is pushing to expand unconventional gas,” Researcher from The Social Justice Initiative Jeremy Moss said.

“But all the evidence suggests the risks to human health and the climate just aren't worth it.”

The report finds that the potential health impacts associated with fracking chemicals are serious. Previous research analysed for the report finds the risks include cancer, skin and eye irritation, respiratory problems, damage to the nervous system and reproductive problems.

Another issue raised in the report is the danger associated with contaminated wastewater which is produced during the fracking process used to extract unconventional gas. It cites cases in the US where wastewater accidents have affected livestock and soil tests showed high levels of materials which can be toxic to humans.

The impact of unconventional gas extraction on the climate is also analysed.

“Australia has just been advised by the Climate Change Authority to boost efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions, yet this paper finds that an expanded unconventional gas industry would be responsible for substantial levels of emissions,” Mr Moss said.

“Environmentally, gas compares poorly to alternatives such as wind and solar. It's even possible that unconventional gas offers limited climate benefits over coal.”

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