



The Hon Wade Noonan MP

Minister for Industry and Employment  
Minister for Resources

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Ref: CMIN163331R

Cr Robert Newton  
Mayor  
South Gippsland Shire Council  
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Dear Cr Newton

**SUPPORT FOR BAN ON ONSHORE UNCONVENTIONAL GAS IN SOUTH GIPPSLAND - PETITION**

Thank you for your letters of 6 April 2016 to the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP, the previous Minister for Energy and Resources, regarding South Gippsland Shire Council's position on onshore unconventional gas and the petition regarding coal mining in the Mirboo North area. I note this petition was signed by around 1,970 people. I apologise for the delay in responding.

The Andrews Labor Government has decided to permanently ban the exploration and development of all onshore unconventional gas in Victoria, including hydraulic fracturing ('fracking') and coal seam gas.

Victoria is the nation's top food and fibre producer with exports worth \$11.6 billion with more than 190,000 workers. The permanent ban on unconventional gas exploration will protect our farmers and preserve Victoria's reputation as a world leading producer of clean, green, high quality food.

The decision comes after extensive consultation with industry, farmers and local communities and is based on the best available evidence that the risks and lack of community support outweigh the benefits for Victoria.

The Government will also legislate to extend the current moratorium on the exploration and development of conventional onshore gas until 30 June 2020. This will provide sufficient time for the Government to undertake a program of geoscientific investigations, resource planning, regulatory development and community engagement.

These will be overseen by an expert panel, headed by the Chief Scientist Amanda Caples, and will include farmers and industry, business and community representatives.

The Government's media announcement can be found at <http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/victoria-bans-fracking-to-protect-farmers/>.

With regard to coal mining, the Andrews Labor Government understands there are significant concerns within the Victorian community about coal exploration and mining. I acknowledge South Gippsland Shire Council's position and have requested that the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources provides updates to Council if Mantle Mining seeks to progress an application for a retention and/or mining licence.

The Government is committed to Victoria's long term economic and social development and wants to give the community and industry certainty in the future. Opportunities for brown coal projects, beyond power generation, will need to be considered in a low emissions context.

The findings of an independent review of previous government programs for coal development will feed into the development of the Government's new coal policy, which will consider the full range of economic, social and environmental factors. The coal policy will be released in late 2016.

Thank you again for writing on these issues and I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Wade Noonan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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Date: 14 / 9 /2016