

My name is Peter James McGowan. I have lived at Tara for going on seventeen years. I am a volunteer senior officer in the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Rural Fire Service. I must now point out that the following submission is mine and does not in any way represent the position of the QFRESRFS. Therefore any errors in facts or conclusions are mine and mine alone. I have fought fires in Southern, South Western and Western Queensland as well as Northern New South Wales. I consider myself an experienced fire fighter.

For many years now I have watched the Kenya and other Gas Fields grow larger and larger. At first sight the 40 to 60 metre corridor cut through the scrub appear to be great fire breaks but as the photos show this is not the case. The timber that was cleared for these corridors was simply pushed to each side hard up against the scrub forming an impenetrable wall meaning we cannot get through. The long straight open areas form a wind channel that will increase the speed of any fire along its edge. At the same time the backfill covering the pipelines was not compacted meaning our trucks cannot cross them if the ground is at all soft. I have had my truck sink into this covering in fine dry weather. This area is literally criss-crossed with these pipelines.

Next comes the wells themselves. I see and follow with interest the case against Linc Energy over the contamination of the Hopelands - Green Swamp area. I also follow with interest the report of gas bubbling in the Condamine River. If Linc Energy's Toxic gas migrated through

the soil following cracks and fissures in the ground isn't the same thing happening when the gas wells are fracked? After all we only know of the leaking gas in the Condamine is the bubbling of the water. This could be, and probably is, happening in many areas throughout this region. What will happen to one of my crews if they are near one of these fissures when it is ignited by floating sparks or embers?

Next is access to fire grounds. The faster we can get to a fire the smaller the fire is and so is easier to control. The amount of locked gates in this area makes this difficult. QGC will come out and unlock the gates for us but this takes time as we have to contact the right person for permission and for them to get the person with the right keys out to open the gate. While I understand the need for security the gas companies seem to have taken the "Lock the Gate" slogan very seriously.

Lastly is the controversial issue of contaminated water and air. In the United States of America rural fire fighters are equipped with personal gas detectors to enable them to escape potentially lethal areas. Here I am expected to send my crews into the gas fields with no detection equipment and no training in this field. This, I believe is a disaster waiting to happen.

To explain my reasoning on this point I have included

photos taken by John Jenkyn, (and used with his permission) of the gas bubbling in the Condamine River and the state of the dams from which we access our water.

As the senior officer in this area I am responsible for the safety of my five trucks and crews as well

as the protection of over one thousand three hundred and forty rateable properties. I do not take these responsibilities lightly. Since the arrival of the coal seam gas mining companies the thought of another fire such as we had in my area in 2002 has me extremely concerned and I honestly fear what will happen if and when this occurs.

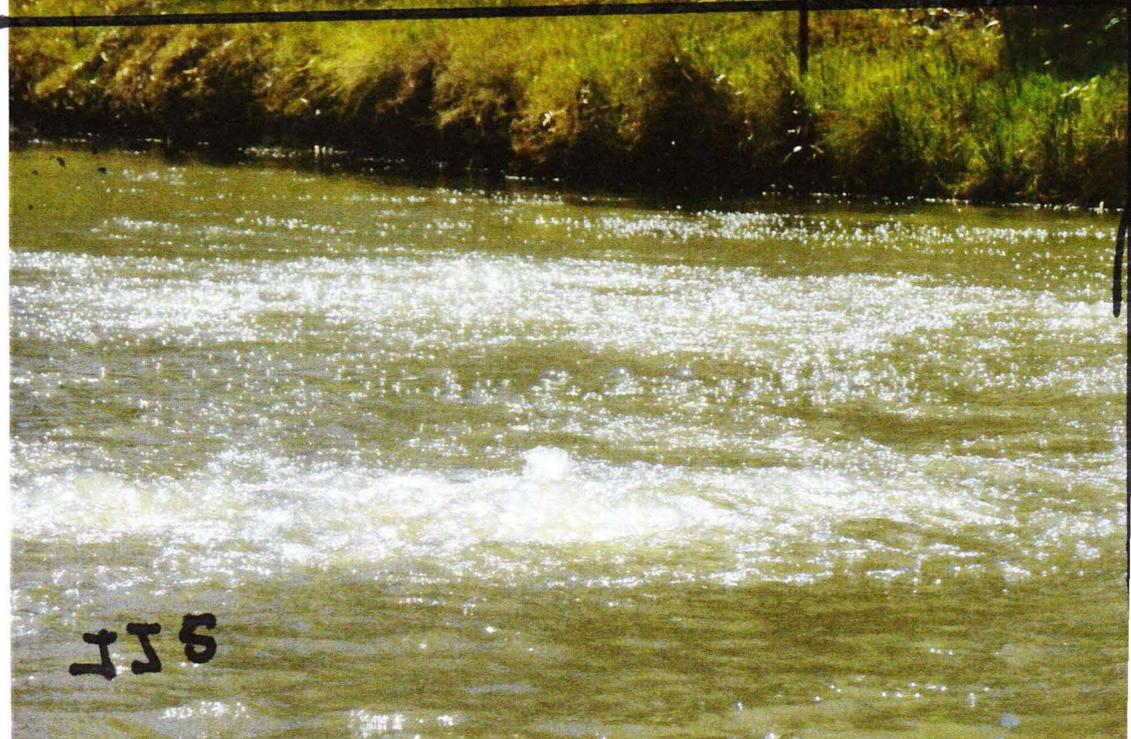
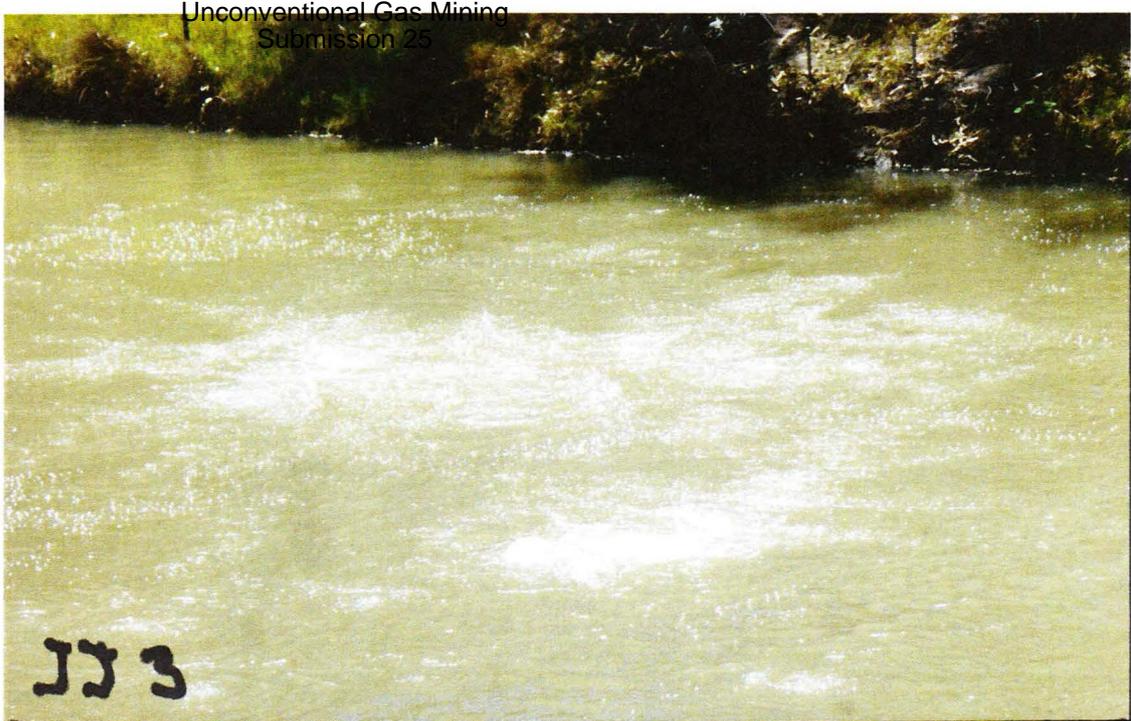
This concludes my submission and I would like to thank the members of the Enquiry for taking your time to read this. I wish you all well in your studies and deliberations.

Peter McGowan

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Photos marked JJ1 to JJ5 are
© John Jenkyn and used with his expressed
Permission. JJ1 and JJ2 show contamination
of local dams. JJ3 JJ4 and JJ5 show
gas bubbling in the Condamine River.



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photos taken
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