

# FRACKMAN



*"If you care about our country, see it!"*  
- Alan Jones

*"No Australian voter should miss this film"*  
- Bob Brown

**Contact:** Kate Hodges, Producer  
*Frackman Films* kate@smithandnasht.com m: 0409 925623  
**Dayne Pratzky & filmmakers are available for interview**  
**High res. stills available on request**  
[www.FrackmanTheMovie.com](http://www.FrackmanTheMovie.com)

## SUMMARY

- Observational documentary about one man's five year struggle against the \$70 billion Coal Seam Gas industry in Queensland
- Aiming to spread awareness of the threats to health, water, land and communities from reckless Unconventional Gas mining
- Funded through philanthropy and government film agencies Screen Australia, Screen West, Screen Queensland
- Grassroots cinema release around Australia – screenings coordinated in conjunction with community groups, beginning with a tour around regional NSW before state election. Will also be available to watch online, details on [FrackmanTheMovie.com](http://FrackmanTheMovie.com).

- Viewers will be offered options to take action by switching their energy company, divesting their superannuation and moving their bank accounts from investors in coal seam gas.

#### **ABOUT 'FRACKMAN'**

'Frackman' is an observational documentary following ordinary Queenslanders caught up in a modern day multinational "gas rush" to secure and exploit coal seam gas. Accidental activist Dayne 'Frackman' Pratzky is building a simple home when the Queensland Gas Company arrives, demanding to sink gas wells on his property. The company claims that legally he has no right to refuse them access. So begins his transformation from knockabout pig-shooter to passionate activist, and a David and Goliath battle against a \$70 billion industry. The filmmakers have followed his five-year battle that includes triumphs and tragedies, love and conflict and reveals the shocking treatment of landholders by some of the most powerful companies in the world. The Coal Seam Gas issue is crossing ideological lines, leaving a peculiar alliance in its wake: farmers and greenies, conservatives and radical activists, rich and poor, old and young. This is a film like no other about a movement like no other.

#### **THE FILMMAKERS**

**Richard Todd (Director/Producer)** produces provocative films, specialising in character-driven, social issues and natural history documentaries that have a positive impact on people, society and the environment. He's worked with international companies and distributors including ABC, Discovery Channel, BBC and National Geographic.

**Trish Lake (Producer) Freshwater Pictures.** Former president of the Screen Producers Australia and award-winning journalist, Trish specialises in feature films and cinema documentaries most recently *My America* and *The Burning Season* (IF Award Best Documentary). Her films have won numerous awards including a record 14 AFI Nominations for the Australian cinema classic, *Gettin' Square*.

**Simon Nasht (Producer) Smith&Nasht** has 25 years experience as a leading documentary producer in Australia, the UK and US. He has made many award-winning productions (including a Logie winner) and has produced for many of the world's leading broadcasters. He has run successful production companies in London and New York and has worked as a foreign correspondent, political reporter and is a best-selling author.

**Kate Hodges (Producer) Smith&Nasht** has worked in the film and television industry for over 25 years. Most recently producing the AACTA nominated documentary *I Can Change Your Mind About Climate* and Walkley Award finalist *After the Deluge, The Valley*. Kate is driving the innovative distribution of the film.

#### **DAYNE 'FRACKMAN' PRATZKY**

**Dayne Pratzky** is a leading figure in the anti-Coal Seam Gas movement in Australia. Dayne starts his campaign of resistance when the Queensland Gas Company (QGC) begins CSG operations in his community of Tara, Queensland (near Chinchilla). The Tara locals recruit

veteran campaigner Drew Hutton to the cause, who then founds the vast Lock the Gate Alliance.

Outraged that gas companies are demanding access to their land, and deeply troubled by the terrible health affects they believe are being caused by the industry, Dayne and his neighbours begin to fight back.

Dayne is an 'accidental' activist, having had no previous involvement with environmental campaigning. "I was a roo shooting, pig hunting kind of bloke," he says. "I'm the most unlikely environmentalist in the world. But when they force their way onto your land and destroy your community, you have no choice but to fight back."

Dayne discovers early on that the techniques used to extract unconventional gas buried deep beneath the ground have many potential risks. There is a significant chance that the region's water supply will be contaminated, and kids in his estate are getting sick. Deeply concerned, Dayne startss *Gasileaks*, a citizen-run watchdog for CSG operations. He is invited to Washington to address a huge rally of Americans opposed to 'fracking' and his campaigning takes him to Wyoming and Colorado, investigating the disastrous consequences of fracking in America. "They're ten years further down the track in the US, and what we are facing at home is an environmental catastrophe that will rival the asbestos disaster," says Dayne.

In the course of fighting for his community, Dayne sometimes skirts the law and his civil disobedience activities lead to charges of dangerous driving and public nuisance. Undeterred, Dayne will continue touring Australia throughout 2015, helping communities living with CSG to fight back and attempt to prevent the industry's spread beyond Queensland.

#### **FRACKMAN'S FUNDING**

The production and distribution of Frackman has been made possible by a mixture of agency and philanthropic funding. Agency funding came from the national body Screen Australia, and state agencies Screen Queensland and Screen West. Philanthropic funding came from individuals, foundations and the Documentary Australia Foundation through the Australian "Good Pitch" initiative. Progressive on-line group GetUp! was an early supporter of the project.

#### **FRACKMAN'S 'FRIENDS'**

The filmmakers have assembled a broad church of supporting organisations to get the film seen by as many Australians as possible.

#### **Lock the Gate**

The Lock the Gate Alliance is a national grassroots coalition of more than 230 local groups, numbering 30,000 supporters, who are concerned about unsafe coal and gas mining. These groups are located in all parts of Australia and include farmers, traditional custodians, conservationists and urban residents.

**GetUp!** is one of Australia's largest campaigning communities, with a membership of over 600,000 people. It's an independent, grassroots, community advocacy organisation that seeks to build a more progressive Australia and hold politicians to account.

**Sunrise Project** provides information, training, strategy support and small grants for

organisations and communities striving to change the world for the better. The Sunrise Project aims to educate, support and empower Australian communities to protect their land, water, community health and global climate from the negative impacts of the fossil fuel industry, and to hasten the inevitable shift to an efficient, renewable energy economy.

**Future Super** is Australia's first fossil-fuel free Superannuation fund. Future Super sees the potential of using Australians' combined superannuation wealth to fund a better world. The team includes climate change campaigners, community organisers, superannuation experts and investment professionals with over 30 years of experience. Together they're bringing an innovative customer-focused approach to superannuation and planet-positive investment.

#### **ABOUT UNCONVENTIONAL GAS & FRACKING**

Australia is in the midst of a "Gas Rush", set to become the world's largest exporter of gas by 2020. This will largely result from Unconventional Gas production, which is now taking place (or being explored for) in all states of Australia. Queensland was the first state to enter the Gas Rush, with a current total of 3,249 wells, while New South Wales has 259.

The Unconventional Gas industry is controversial because of its environmental and health risks. No baseline studies have been conducted into the health, air and water of communities in gas affected areas.

Production is highly invasive above and below ground, requiring massive numbers of wells and intrusive extraction methods such as horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing (fracking). Many chemicals used in fracking are toxic and have not been assessed for environmental and health impacts. There is significant concern that these chemicals can contaminate water sources.

Under Australian law, landowners cannot refuse access to their properties for gas activities.

*More information + sources can be found in the attached sheet.*

# SYNOPSIS

## *Short*

This is a film about ordinary people caught up in a modern day multinational “gas rush” to secure and exploit coal seam gas. Accidental activist Dayne ‘The Frackman’ Pratzky was building a simple home on his property, until the gas company arrived, demanding to install wells. So began his transformation from knockabout pig-shooter to passionate activist, and a David and Goliath battle against a \$70 billion industry. Along the way he finds love, tragedy and triumph - and a few laughs.

## *Long*

This is a film about a bunch of ordinary people caught up in a modern day multinational “gold rush” to secure and exploit coal seam gas.

Fracking is an issue that is presenting difficult questions for all of Australia’s political parties, but at its heart is a very human drama. What we find is that smouldering resentment has turned conservative country people to civil disobedience. Politicians with their snouts in the trough are caught off-guard not knowing who to support.

Our central character is Dayne Pratzky – a knockabout pig shooter building a simple home on his block of land in Central Queensland. One day the gas company comes calling and demands access to his land for gas mining. Dayne is told he has no right to refuse access to his land, and so begins his journey as a reluctant activist that will take him around the world.

Dayne introduces us to the people drawn into a battle that is crossing the ideological divide, bringing together a peculiar alliance of farmers, conservationists and political conservatives. Along the way Dayne finds love, tragedy and triumph as he battles to save his community from becoming an industrial wasteland. There are laughs, tears and near death experiences, and a raft of colourful Aussie Bush characters.

But it’s the underlying theme that is critical: Who owns our land? Who owns our future? Can we balance competing claims for our water, food and energy and still preserve the environment?

One thing is certain: the rush to extract Coal Seam Gas is changing our way of life and forcing us to ask tough questions about what we value.

# THE FILM'S AIMS

Frackman is a pioneering film, breaking down established models of fundraising, release and audience engagement. Following a trend in the US that has seen campaigning films affect real social change – from school bullying to rape in the military, Frackman is as much about the outcome as it is about the story.

Having raised a significant budget to allow a national 'impact' strategy, Frackman is a new kind of story-led advocacy.

"Yes, it's a very political film, and we make no apology for that," says producer Simon Nasht. "But it's not party-political in the old tired way that's reduced to a battle between left and right. This is a film about a subject that affects us all, and we are creating a new way for people to get involved."

The plan includes an innovative distribution strategy, both in traditional cinemas and online, and in a broad grassroots tour around regional Australia

In the first stage of this campaign, the film will tour as an 'event screening' around New South Wales ahead of the March 2015 election. Screenings will be followed by a Q&A with 'The Frackman' himself, director Richard Todd, and other key speakers including local candidates and scientists. These talks will canvas how CSG relates to each locality and how residents can take action.

This independent, grassroots style of distribution will activate a large audience typically ignored by the major distributors: regional Australia. The film will then open up to audiences nationally.

With support from Frackman's affiliates (Lock the Gate, GetUp!, Future Super), audiences will be introduced to ways they can switch their energy from providers involved with Coal Seam Gas, and divest their finances from financial institutions funding Coal Seam Gas projects.

Key to success is making sure the film itself is an enjoyable, engaging and revealing experience. "Nothing will work if people find it boring," says producer Trish Lake.

This is a film that will make you laugh and make you cry, but it'll never preach: with colourful bush characters and quintessentially Aussie humour, Frackman is far from the educational documentaries you watched in school.

# KEY CONTRIBUTORS

## **Dayne Pratzky, “Frackman”.**

Dayne Pratzky has been a prominent figure in the anti-Coal Seam Gas movement in Australia since its inception. Dayne started his campaign of resistance when the Queensland Gas Company (QGC) began CSG operations in his community of Tara, Queensland (near Chinchilla). The Tara locals recruited veteran campaigner Drew Hutton to the cause, who then founded the vast Lock the Gate Alliance.

Dayne was born in Cooma, moving with his family around regional NSW throughout his childhood and adolescence. Dayne worked in a variety of trades until he was rendered unfit to work from a serious industrial accident. At this point, he bought his property in Tara and relocated there until he managed to sell his devalued land to QGC. Dayne will continue touring Australia throughout 2015, empowering communities living with invasive gas production.

## **Drew Hutton, National President and founder, Lock the Gate.**

Drew Hutton is a veteran social movement campaigner and founding member of the Queensland and Australian Greens. He has published books and numerous articles, especially on green philosophy, history and ethics. He brought together the first book on green politics in Australia in 1987 and with Libby Connors wrote “A History of the Australian Environment Movement,” published by Cambridge University Press. For the past 30 years, Hutton has been a key organiser or spokesperson for a range of environmental and social justice campaigns.

## **Dr Mariann Lloyd Smith, Chemical policy expert.**

Mariann Lloyd-Smith is Senior Advisor to the National Toxics Network (NTN), the peak chemical public interest NGO in Australia and Pacific region; and to IPEN, a global network aiming to eliminate persistent toxic pollutants. Mariann gained her PhD from the Faculty of Law at the University of Technology (UTS), Sydney and has worked in the area of chemicals policy and waste management for over two decades. She served on the Technical Advisory Group of Australia’s national industrial chemical regulator for a decade. She is chair of the international working group on Unconventional Gas chemicals and was a member of the UN Expert Group on Climate Change and Chemicals.

## **Dr Matt Landos, Fish veterinarian.**

Dr Landos (BVSc [Hons1] MANZCVS [Aquatic Animal Health Chapter]) is the Director of Future Fisheries Veterinary Service. Future Fisheries have provided field, laboratory, research and technical aquatic animal health and production services to commercial aquaculture and wild fisheries since 2005, both in Australia and New Zealand. Dr Landos is an honorary lecturer and associate researcher at the University of Sydney’s Faculty of Veterinary Science. He has consulted to Australian State and Commonwealth Governments, and internationally to the Brunei Darussalam Department of Fisheries.

## **Andrew Quilty, Photojournalist.**

Andrew Quilty is renowned as one of Australia's top documentary photographers. In the past year, he took out both Nikon/Walkley Press Photographer of the Year and Photo of the Year. He previously won a World Press Photo Award and Walkley Young Australian Photojournalist of the Year. Quilty has been published by The New York Times, TIME, Newsweek, Rolling Stone, Foreign Policy and The Guardian – among others – and he is a member of the Australian photographic collective, Oculi. Andrew's production stills, taken during a week of protesting at Tara, are available upon request.

## ABOUT FRACKING AND UNCONVENTIONAL GAS



### Unconventional gas basics:

Unconventional gas exploration and/or production is now taking place in all Australian states. Coal seam gas, shale gas and tight gas differ from natural gas because they are more difficult to extract and cannot be developed with conventional processes.

In the last ten years, the industry has expanded rapidly with Australia set to be the world's biggest exporter of gas by 2020.

### What's the problem?

Unconventional gas production is highly invasive above and below ground, requiring massive numbers of wells and intrusive extraction methods such as horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing (fracking).

Fracking involves high-pressure injection of large volumes of water, sand, radioactive tracers and chemical additives into the ground to fracture the source rock and stimulate gas flow. Many chemicals used in fracking are toxic and have not been assessed for environmental and health impacts. There is significant concern that these chemicals can contaminate water sources. Fracking can also cause earthquakes. A [report](#) by the Committee for Economic Development of Australia summarised: "In addition to concerns over contamination of

aquifers from the chemicals added to fracking fluid, issues have also been raised about contamination of water supplies from fugitive gas after fracking, and seismic activity and tremors associated with the drilling and fracking process".

Because coal seams contain both water and gas, large volumes of ground water must also be extracted during coal seam gas drilling. This wastewater is generally salty and may contain toxic chemicals, radioactive compounds, and heavy metals. There is no proven safe method to properly dispose of this waste.

### **What is BTEX?**

BTEX is an acronym that stands for benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylenes, which are volatile organic compounds (VOCs). BTEX can be [naturally occurring](#) and benzene is a known carcinogen (cancer causing).

BTEX chemicals have been used in fracking fluids used by coal seam gas companies. The use of BTEX by coal seam gas operators has been banned in both [NSW](#) and [QLD](#), however the process of [hydraulic fracturing can release](#) naturally occurring BTEX so it remains a risk factor during coal seam gas operations even when regulation is in place to ban gas companies using it as an additive during drilling.

### **How much water is involved in coal seam gas exploration and production?**

The amount of water involved in coal seam gas operations varies from project to project. The CSIRO says: No two wells or coal seams behave identically and water production can vary from a few thousand to hundreds of thousands of litres a day, depending on the underground water pressures and geology.

### **Landholder's rights to refuse access**

Unconventional gas resources are owned by the Crown, not the property owner. The Crown provides access to these resources to gas companies and gives landholders only a minor right to 'negotiate' an access agreement and compensation deal with those companies. If a landholder does not negotiate an agreement, then the gas company can take the matter to arbitration and then to a court if it wants to force access.

### **Summary of negative impacts from invasive gas mining**

#### **Social:**

- Industrialisation of whole regions with wells, roads, pipelines, and infrastructure, and accompanying reduced quality of life for rural residents.
- Serious health effects experienced in communities living near gasfields in the US and Queensland.
- Splitting of families as rural residents are forced to leave their family farms and homes over health concerns
- Significant devaluation of properties of residents living near gas infrastructure

- Loss and contamination of agricultural land for food production

**Environmental:**

- Contamination of ground and surface waters with toxic chemicals and methane.
- Release of hazardous air pollutants from venting, flaring and wastewater evaporation.
- Depletion of water resources from well dewatering and use in fracking.
- Substantial greenhouse emissions from methane leakage.
- Fragmentation and destruction of native forests and critical wildlife habitat.
- Increased earthquake activity from fracking and wastewater re-injection.

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

**Richard Todd**

I first heard about Coal Seam Gas (CSG) when an exploration well was proposed to be dug 15kms from my house in Margaret River. Like most people at the time, I knew very little about CSG. While we were all quite excited by the prospect of a new 'greener' energy source, most of the community were not convinced that mining should occur in our renowned vineyard and tourism-rich region. I started doing some research, and within weeks I was convinced that at best, this transition fuel didn't have a place in our society and at worst, if the developments continued we could well be facing an unannounced and unimaginable environmental disaster.

- 

- I took a punt and filmed an anti-CSG rally in Sydney at Parliament House in February 2011. Amongst the crowd, there was a guy dressed in a white outfit with a gas mask. He was known as the 'The Frackman'. When he removed the gas mask and spoke at the rally, an articulate and passionate landholder, Dayne Pratzky revealed himself. I thought, "I have to meet this guy". I phoned Dayne and discovered that he wasn't an activist nor a 'greenie', but had been forced into taking a stand because he refused to accept Queensland Gas Company's (QGC) offer to drill on the "potentially very productive" soil he called home. As it transpired, QGC had inadvertently crossed swords with the wrong guy, and Dayne, the 'accidental activist', initiated a campaign that avalanched into a movement which today includes more than 200 community groups across four states.

- As Dayne and I travelled around the countryside, in his beat up old Hilux ute, we met a lot of folks caught up in the gas-rush. As we visited each town, we'd come across people that were disillusioned, confused and some even desperate. There was a feeling of hopelessness as the uninvited CSG fields started appearing in and around their properties, some which had been owned by families for generations. Losing their rights to control decisions made on their land was one thing but the fact that the profit was being taken off shore, whilst state governments complained of the potential of domestic gas shortages, enraged landowners. These people aren't the 'professional greenies' the companies and the governments keep referring to in media releases. These are ordinary folk that have been backed into a corner. Could this really be happening in Australia?

- 

- Here was a subject rich in characters, incident, conflict and emotion, the type of drama that would be the backbone of an observational film about the challenges of our age and the rapacious hunger for energy. But equally, it was clear that such a passionate, partisan film would not sit easily within the narrow construct of domestic television. The current affairs crews had come and gone - this was about what happened after they left and before they got there, and the price people pay for holding firm to principles. This story belongs in the cinema.

# PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

Simon Nasht, Trish Lake, Richard Todd.

Our attraction to the topic of Coal Seam Gas is that it's very much a subject of the "new politics". It doesn't conform to the old-style binary equation of "left-wing" and "right-wing". Here is an issue that crosses the divide between city and country, young and old, conservative and progressive. Can you imagine any other topic that would bring Alan Jones and Bob Brown together in total agreement?

Australia is soon to become the world's largest gas exporter. Investments of around \$200 billion have been made in just the last few years. Yet despite the scale of this industry, many people have only the vaguest understanding of the impacts the industry is having on regional Australia. Frackman, which tells a very personal story, attempts to inform audiences of the other side of the investment equation: the hidden consequences for water, health, land and communities.

However, we didn't want to present this reality in a pile of dry facts and figures. We wanted to tell the human story. And Dayne is certainly human, warts and all. He doesn't pretend to be a seasoned campaigner or a slick media operator, but he certainly becomes a passionate and effective advocate for his cause. He describes himself as an "accidental activist", and we hope that's what makes this story resonate with Australians everywhere: it's a real life version of *The Castle*, where a powerful force comes to town and tells you what you can do on your own land. It's a love story, and it has its fair share of triumphs and tragedies. Most of all, we want it to be a film that entertains as much as it informs. We hope it will inspire people to think about these complex issues, but it's not strictly speaking an "activist film", it's a film *about* an activist and the lengths that he will go to, to protect his land and community. Australians everywhere need to think about these issues, as we balance our competing demand for food, water and energy. Important decisions being made now will lock us into long-term consequences: we need to get the balance right. As Alan Jones says, "*if you care about this country, see the film*".