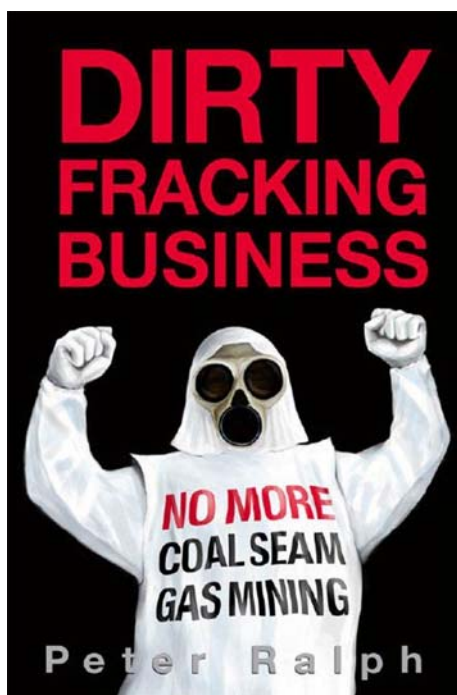


Dirty Fracking Business



Dirty Fracking Business

Peter Ralph

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272 pp

I need to declare, at the outset, that I edited this book for the author in preparation for publication. I also need to say that I am, on current evidence, opposed to the uncontrolled exploration for and extraction of coal seam gas, the subject of this novel. I will therefore aim to limit my review of the book to the merits of the book as a work of art.

Peter Ralph has taken a topic about which there is heated debate in at least Queensland and New South Wales (and parts of the USA) and he has written a barely-disguised fiction: names of individuals and corporations have been changed, although, in some cases, only minimally. He has turned something that is controversial to many people into a gripping drama.

In an earlier novel, [The CEO](#), Peter Ralph used his many years of experience in the corporate world to craft a novel depicting the greed and immorality of the majority of the people caught up in that world. In *Dirty Fracking Business* he has taken the results of research into a particular industry and created a fictional account of what is happening in the real world. In the process, he has created memorable characters, some of whom are in the industry and others who are at the receiving end of it, as well as those drawn in from the outside. Some of his characters are thinly-veiled paintings of real people in the real world and Peter Ralph makes them almost bigger than they are, which, in a few cases, is quite a feat.

It is clear that the author has an agenda in this book. However, because it *is* clear, the agenda does not spoil the story. As part of my involvement in the production of the book I have read it from start to finish about seven times, yet it did not lose its sense of drama nor its ability to engage me as a reader. The characters are, on the whole, believable and well fleshed out. Many of the characters carry entrenched attitudes throughout the book and others change and develop as people as a result of their experiences. In this, the novel is true to life.

Peter Ralph is an excellent storyteller, dropping the reader immediately into the drama of the story. Emotions run close to the surface from the start and spill over many times. Ralph also brings humour into the telling and is sometimes tongue-in-cheek about the goings on in a small country town.

You can read this novel as a gripping yarn and enjoy it for that. You can also have it prompt you to ask what is really going on in parts of this country and then look further. Either way, I can highly recommend this book.