



June Tapp – Hearing Transcript

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8 March 2017

Knotts Crossing Restaurant, Katherine

Speaker: June Tapp

June Tapp: My name is June Tapp. I have lived in the territory a long time. I went to primary school in Katherine. I have lived a large part of my life on cattle stations, where lack of water was always a problem. I now live in Katherine, where the last five or six years, until this present wet season, have been very dry years. There has been much talk of water and very low river levels and aquifer levels and scandals re: water allocations. Water is on everyone's mind.

Presently there is a water contamination problem to do with chemicals in the Katherine area. The federal government has commissioned a study into the potential health effects from the growth of chemicals now contaminating many bores in the Katherine Region. The present Labour government is also conducting a review into controversial water allocations. Water contamination is on everyone's mind. I am totally opposed to fracking and support a ban on fracking.

Now, of course, the main issue is water, so I thought I'd just have that say on water. My main concern other than the water or the other environmental things. I wish to present three or four reports to the panel. The main one being a discussion paper called the Economic Impact of Queensland's Unconventional Gas Experiment and the Implications for Northern Territory Policy Makers. This report says re: Queensland, "The economic claims of the proponents, the oil and gas industry, were not tested by the government despite its obligations to objectively assess the project."

I've got a bit muddled here. I've sort of got caught [inaudible 00:02:16]. The only figures or numbers presented to the Northern Territory public re: the economics of fracking have been those presented by the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association, the representative of the oil and gas industry. These figures have been hammered home by the CLP government who ardently supports fracking and the local media. There has never been an independent report. No questions were asked by the previous CLP government re: the figures presented by APPEA, and the Labour government has just seemed to accept these figures with no question.



The public has queried the figures constantly, but no answers. The only comments made by the previous CLP, Country Liberal Party, were "Yes, the figures are rubbery." When given a specific question, which was ... This was at a public meeting ... "Is the royalty returned to the NT government 450 million, as claimed by APPEA, or is the amount \$45 million?" The then Head of the Department of Mines and Energy, Mr. Ron Kelly, said, "It's somewhere in the middle." They had a few laughs through that, but it's not good enough.

We, the people of the territory, have a right to know the projections of return for Northern Territory people who are the owners of the gas. The figures supplied by APPEA from their commissioned report were blindly accepted by the government. This is what they said, "APPEA said that unconventional gas in the Northern Territory was valued at \$22.4 billion between 2020 and 2040. There would be a return of \$1 billion in royalties to the Northern Territory government over those 20 years." APPEA has claimed that the return to the Northern Territory government would be 460 million.

These claims were made by Steve Gerhardy, Matt Doman, but Malcolm Roberts, CEO for ACT, said, NT News, January 18, 2016, "Returns to the government of at least 236 million," or up to the 460 million that they claim. That was the first time anyone had ever heard of [inaudible 00:04:48].

They've just hammered and hammered and hammered away at these figures over and over and over and over again. The NT News is just totally on side. All its editorials, they just keep on repeating these figures handed out by APPEA. APPEA claimed that originally when they put forward their little proposal that there would be 4,000 jobs, up to 2040, but the number has since risen dramatically to 6,300. There's never been any detail about where or who or what these jobs will be.

My concern is that when the NT treasurer, Nicole Manison, said a few days ago, on March the 3rd, that, "It would be 10 years before the territory felt any benefit from gas investment even if the moratorium were lifted tomorrow," that we NT people could end up in the same financial position as the Southern taxpayers, who will receive no revenue for a couple of decades from the Gladstone LNG plants in Queensland, who will be deducting capital for many years. Senator Larissa Waters called it, "The great fossil fuel rot."

In 10 years' time, there could possibly be a ban on dirty fossil fuels, and if presently the Labour NT government sees no benefit for 10 years, what is the point in fracking going ahead? There is no information publicly as to how Nicole Manison arrived at her conclusions. We, the public, need to know what is going on.

Take into account ... My main thing is about the Labour government and the CLP government just taking these figures with no questions, no independent investigation taken. Many people believe that contrary to claims by APPEA, Malcolm Roberts, that state governments, including the Northern Territory, are ... These are the words he used, "Manufacturing a supply crisis," that it is



members of APPEA who are manufacturing the gas supply crisis, while maximising their profits through exports of gas at the expense of domestic consumers. There's plenty of gas being produced in Australia."

The moratoriums and bans on fracking put in place by Victoria ... They made permanent today, or someone said ... New South Wales, other states and the NT are because of public concern for the environment. The gas industry has not come up with any data to convince the people that fracking is safe. Poisoning of our rivers and aquifers is of deep concern. There is no insurance available for agricultural producers to ensure that if contamination occurs, their business operations would be safeguarded from financial or legal liability. The insurance industry is not convinced re: the safety of fracking.

Back to APPEA. In 2013, the APPEA claimed that the oil and gas industry had created 100,000 new jobs in a single year. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the oil and gas industry added only 9,400 jobs that year and employed 20,700 people in total. The absurdity of the claims belies the seriousness of the deception. There is an urgent need for an independent inquiry be put in place by the Northern Territory government. The Northern Territory government, I just believe it has an obligation to objectively assess the economic returns to the NT government from the proposed oil and gas project and not blindly parrot APPEA's numbers, figures, re: the economics because it suits them. That's the Northern Territory government both.

After all these rubbery figures, what value do we put on our environment and our most precious asset, water? I like to get that water bit in every so often. I would also like to present a small booklet called Protecting the Daly Basin and the Rivers Region from the Impacts of Unconventional Oil and Gas: The Territory Experience. That's the name of this little booklet. It's from the Don't Frack Katherine organisation. This little booklet covers the history of fracking in the Northern Territory and state.

When Alan Hawk had his first inquiry in the Northern Territory ... After the inquiry was announced, but before it started, Alan Hawk said on 7:30 TV report that, "Fracking was safe in the Northern Territory because fracking had occurred for 30 years." I believe that's a myth. This little booklet, which covers the history of fracking in the Northern Territory, and what it says is this ... Always there's the APPEA mob, or the oil and gas industry, say it's safe and the other mob, us, say it's not safe.

This is what the little booklet says. It says, "The Northern Territory (and Australia) had its first deep-shale, horizontally drill and hydraulically fractured well completed in 2011 by Petro Frontier to a depth of 1,948 metres and a length of approx. 875 metres. During 2011 and 2012, Petro Frontier drilled two more of the unconventional hydrocarbon wells. These are the only wells of this type registered in the Northern Territory. The fracking of wells in the Northern Territory by the highly controversial, unconventional gas industry is only a couple of years old and in experimental stages." It says in big letters, "The NT does not have baseline studies. We are not prepared for this industry."



This little booklet is a couple of years old. I looked around for the date on it. It come out a couple of years ago. My big concern is about national parks. You never hear anything much about national parks. The thought of people going in there and drilling for gas, it just horrifies me. It makes me furious. There are applications and granted licences over national parks. I've got all funny little bits and pieces here. I never got round ... I didn't start in time, but one of the people told me that it's okay if I present this as a unfinished work or some such thing.

Hon. Justice

Rachel Pepper:

Absolutely. Of course, you can always submit something on in writing if you want to or supplement what you're saying now in writing later on.

June Tapp:

I'd love to. I would.

Hon. Justice

Rachel Pepper:

Absolutely, that's fine.

June Tapp:

I've got a little bit more, I think, about the-

Hon. Justice

Rachel Pepper:

Please go ahead. [crosstalk 00:12:29]

June Tapp:

Does the oil-gas pipeline come into it?

Hon. Justice

Rachel Pepper:

Whatever you wish to say. You've still got another five minutes.

June Tapp:

I've got a report of the ... I left all my bits and pieces at home because they'd said I can finish it off later. That oil-gas pipeline is questioned. The viability of that, I've read reports on that and they reckon it's just a white elephant, not viable. The cart before the horse, where is all this gas coming from if it's unsafe? I've got other, but it's just nothing scientific in it. Can I just ... ?

Hon. Justice

Rachel Pepper:

Whatever you wish to say. Whatever you wish to say.

June Tapp:

Thank you. The multi-billion-dollar oil-gas fossil fuel industry has ruled the Northern Territory government. After NT politicians and bureaucrats have killed off our rivers, the Roper at Katherine and the Daly, with massive overall locations of water and poisoned our aquifers at Tindal and Nooloo with fracking (gas mining), what is left for tourists to see? Gas fields and environmental devastation. Where is the tourist industry? Where is the cattle producers organisations? We know where the ... I won't say that. They remain silent.

Our big clean rivers, the bush and the promoted clean and green image of the last frontier has been taken over by oil and gas mining companies. The men who would kill our rivers and poison our aquifers will leave a trail of thousands of gas wells. We already have a devastating legacy of mining



environmental damage, lakes of toxic waste and poisoned rivers and thousands and millions of dollars of unrehabilitated ... They said the legacy mine to fix up the rehabilitation of ... Not gas mines ... Round the territory is almost \$3 billion. Glencore alone at McArthur River is possibly half a billion dollars if they had a bond. The Northern Territory government won't tell us what the bond money amounts are.

Millions of dollars of unrehabilitated devastated land, McArthur River, Pine Creek, Mount Todd, Rum Jungle, Red Bank and other areas where the miners have packed up and left this massive environmental mess. The Northern Territory taxpayer will pay the bill. Frackers show no concern for the lives of their neighbours, the rivers and the aquifers don't stop at boundaries once they are poisoned. Frackers never mention the environment or the threat to our native animals, barramundi, broilgas, turtles, wallabies, gouldian finches, emus, etc.

Frackers talk only one language, their own private gain. No one wants a gas mine on their land for aesthetic reasons. There is only one reason, dollars of one kind or another, a quick grab, short-term gain for a few, long-time pain for the ones who have no say about mining companies coming onto their land. Mining royalties paid to the Northern Territory government are mainly to overseas miners and frackers, who take the territory's precious minerals and gas for the profit of mainly overseas investors. The Reserve Bank of Australia estimates that foreign interests effectively own four-fifths of Australia's mining operations.

Many people are asking giving the huge and ongoing handouts to the mining companies and frackers, how viable are these industries? Presently, the viability of the \$800 million white elephant, gas pipeline is also being questioned. Then I've got this little report [inaudible 00:16:14]. Be careful what you wish for because the report by the Australia Institute just won the Economic Implications for the Northern Territory Policy Makers. I do have other kinds of reports there, but that's about it, I think. Not too many deep and probing questions.

Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper:

I can't make any guarantees there, but I'm sure you'll be able to answer them. To the extent that, Mrs. Tapp, you've referred to various documents and reports. Are you willing to make those available to the inquiry?

June Tapp:

Yeah, I do have them at home. It's just ...

Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper:

That's all right.

June Tapp:

Didn't bring them today.

Hon. Justice



Rachel Pepper: If you can even just either email them through or post them through to the inquiry at ... The address and website is easily obtainable. That would be of assistance.

June Tapp: Thank you.

Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper: I'm going to start with one question if I may. I think you referred to the poisoning of ... I think it was the Tindal Aquifer, if I heard correctly. My understanding was that that was as a result ... There is chemical contamination there, but that was a result of the PFAS chemicals.

June Tapp: Yes, yes.

Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper: I wasn't sure.

June Tapp: I just meant water in general.

Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper: Right, okay. I misunderstood.

June Tapp: It's sort of a big thing. They've also got a new industry in the territory, sandalwood, growing these trees, which is causing a bit of ... There have been two big companies gone bust. There's Timbercorp and Great Southern, leaving people just devastated all over Australia, bankrupt. People are a little bit ... I just threw it in for water generally. I wasn't linking it to fracking.

Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper: Are you mentioning the sandalwood? I have read various reports to this emerging sandalwood industry. Is your concern about different types of industries competing for each other or is your concern about the water?

June Tapp: I don't know too much about it, but I do know that people have talked to me about it. They're concerned, yeah.

Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper: Questions from ... Yes, Dr. Jones.

Dr. David Jones: You mentioned the issue about water over allocation. We've heard anecdotal evidence that that might be the case, but do you have any evidence in your collection there, which would support that?

June Tapp: Not here, but I do at home. I will be putting it in, yes.

Dr. David Jones: I'd like to see that.



June Tapp: It's a very big ... The Labour government is going to have a review on it now. It's just coming up.

Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper: It's under way. Any further questions?

June Tapp: Thank God.

Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper: I'm not sure that I called time.

Dr David Jones: Perhaps if you could just explain a little bit more about your concern about damage to pastoral areas. I think you were referring to mining companies at the time. You're concerned that there are no bonds or if there are bonds, they're too small to cover damage.

June Tapp: I do know of one in particular. There's my son here, Daniel Tapp. He lives out on the Roper on a cattle station and ... Just yesterday, I was reading about this ilmenite mine across the Roper Highway from where Daniel lives. It was owned by a man called Jerry Ren, a Chinese billionaire man. I was just reading the other day. When the story about the ilmenite mine first come out, we were really interested because once that land belonged to us. I just read the other day that the bond ... They said it was worth about \$12 billion, this ilmenite. It had a mine going there. I think it might be half closed at the moment. I'm not too sure. The bond on it was \$250,000. I've got that back home. I've got that, yes. What was your question?

Dr David Jones: Has there been damage caused by that mine?

June Tapp: I don't know. I just know that I thought that bond was very ... Both governments have said they can't release the amount of the ... Another one, a big one, is Mount Todd up near Pine Creek. This is years and years old. At the time, they had a bond on it of \$900,000. Now, do you know what the rehabilitation costs? You should see the aerial photos. They're disgusting. Great lakes of toxic ... I won't go there. It's gone up to \$200 million to clean that mess up. It's disgusting. Disgraceful. People come up to the territory and its open slather.

Dr David Jones: Thank you.

Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper: Thank you. We've got one more question. Yes, Prof. Priestly.

Prof. Brian Priestly: You mentioned that it's not possible to get insurance against potential damage produced by fracking activities. Do you know whether or not the insurance industry has actually published any analysis of those risks or this largely anecdotal?



June Tapp: Anecdotal, but my son Daniel has got some stuff, proper stuff, there on that in his report. It affects him because he lives out there. Just let me say too about these mining companies. How I first come to get involved in this, I'd heard of fracking out there, out round the ridges somewhere in the US or A or so. I'd never taken particular notice. I saw a few little bits on the TV, where the rivers catch alight, the gas blah, blah. Daniel, who is about 300 km away from me and I see him every so often, we've bonded over the anti-fracking.

How I first ... One day, I said, "Oh, those bloody miners have been here again and they did this and they did that." I didn't realise is ... This is the other side, next door to the ilmenite mine, the other side of the Roper Highway. They had two iron ore mines all there. They were just disgusting. A couple of times, I went out there and these great big things, just a one-lane road and a lot of dirt and corrugation, the main highway. On a couple of occasions, they cancelled the Roper River annual fishing ... Whatever you call it. I'm not a fishing person because the road was too dangerous. As I say, they just do what they like.

They've both gone bankrupt, those two ilmenite mines, and Jerry Ren ... This isn't 100%, but he had a share of ... That's the man with the ilmenite mine. He had a share in those two iron ore mines that went bankrupt and closed down. What I was going to say ... See, Daniel ... These would only be individual people. There's probably plenty of relatively well-mannered people out there, but they were coming onto his land. They've got the right to do so, but their attitude was just rude like, "We're entitled to ... " He had a bit of a row with them. He was coming home from Mataranka one day and he'd already said to them, "If you are going to come over, just give us a ring and let us know."

When he was on his way home ... You've got an access road of about 7 km. These two Toyotas were coming along. They pulled him on the side of the road or they pulled up. They were looking around for a bore site because their water supply on the other side wasn't real good, the road where they were. It's just a hide, just coming onto your place and just driving around in a couple of Toyotas and across the paddock and across here and up there and through the gate. It's just a hide even if you're entitled to do it legally. And their manner is rough. Thank you.

Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper: Not asking permission beforehand?

June Tapp: Yeah, yeah.

Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper: No proper negotiations, is that what you mean?

June Tapp: Yeah, nothing. Nothing.



Rachel Pepper: Just here we are. We've got the permission and we're here.

June Tapp: There was another man. Daniel if later ... I don't know whether ... He also is a private owner and the manager there. The name of this cattle station is Mount McMinn. He said ... I also saw this, but I can't the details. Daniel will probably know it off by heart. It was on the 7:30 ABC TV report about how this man ... It sounds a bit incredible, but still it did happen or it said it did. He was flying around in his helicopter. He saw this mining camp. The places are pretty big like say Old Rover Valley, 40 mile by 50 mile. There's no other buildings around of any kind. This is his story. It was on the 7:30 report. He was flying around in a helicopter and he spotted this mining company. They'd just come in and made a little road and it was all set up. Sounds a bit incredible. Ask Daniel when his turn comes. They do what they like.

Hon. Justice

Rachel Pepper: Mrs. Tapp, thank you very much for your presentation today.

June Tapp: Thank you.