

From: Rhodri Johns
To: [fracking inquiry](#)
Subject: Submission from D.R. Johns BSc PhD
Date: Sunday, 30 April 2017 1:59:13 PM

Dear Panel

I work in the oil and gas industry, and am still employed as an oil and gas professional, the views here are my own.

As a geologist I experience at first hand the lack of understanding of the earth's subsurface and oil and gas operations by the vast majority of the public.

This low level of understanding of the subsurface and petroleum operations is exploited by activist groups in their overt propaganda war against 'fossil fuel companies'. As a result many well meaning and concerned citizens, and bodies, have adopted anti- fracking and anti- oil and gas industry stances based on ill -founded concerns of the perceived impact of oil and gas operations on aquifers, crustal stability (seismicity) surface footprint etc.

Education can help, however petroleum geology or oil and gas operations are not easily explained in a 10 minute or even an half an hour discussion. The long term effectiveness of such an approach is questionable. An analogy would be to attempt to explain the safety of powered flight through fluid mechanics equations (and expecting someone with no physics background to be reassured as to the safety of flying).

Some of the response to public concerns lies in statistics, performance, familiarity and trust. People fly because they know that while flying carries some risk, the chance of any plane crash happening is extremely low. People trust, to varying degrees, through familiarity, the companies, the pilots, the engineers and the aeroplanes that airlines utilise. Unfortunately the public does not experience, or even see, oil and gas operations in Australia or begin to comprehend the experience and professionalism of individuals, or the amount of engineering and geoscientific work, that is involved in identifying, preparing and executing petroleum wells.

Statistical performance data can help to overcome public fears. The Oil and Gas Industry has an excellent overall performance record but can do more to publicise their achievements. As with flying, oil and gas drilling has risks. Maconda, Piper Alpha, and other events are shocking reminders of some of the risks in oil and gas operations where rules, regulations, standards and individuals' performances weren't effective in mitigating those risks. Likewise catastrophic plane crashes are reminders of airline industry risks when safety checks or individuals fail. These rare accidents do not mean the whole industry (either airline or petroleum) is unsafe. Oil and gas companies have an excellent record overall, just like airline companies. The performance of oil and gas companies, and the rules and regulations they are subject to, must be made more publically available, and where necessary endorsed by third parties, so that the public can make up their own mind with respect to the trustworthiness of oil and gas operations .

I hope that the inquiry could consider recommending that either the NT Government, or the Federal government, provide an authoritative, unbiased independent forum where public inquiries and concerns in relation to oil and gas company operations and performances can be addressed and responded to in an informed and unbiased way. I believe this would help to alleviate public concern in relation to oil and gas operations. Such a forum would be a constructive alternative to the current situation where uninformed debate at many levels in society (including at the very highest) is undermining decision making and affecting the progress of oil and gas projects that could have a significant positive impact on the Australian economy and Australian communities.

Yours sincerely

D.R. Johns BSc, PhD