



Katherine – Annette Raynor

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Godinymayin Yijard Arts & Culture Centre, Katherine

Speakers: Annette Raynor

Annette Raynor: Okay, my name's Annette Raynor and I'm appearing here as me, nobody else. Just so you know, I have got a copy of everything, with all the references here for you.

Hon. Justice

Rachel Pepper: Excellent, thank you.

Annette Raynor: It's just mine's in big letters so I can read it. Due to the time frame today, I'm going to concentrate on one issue only, and that's the social impacts. It's your Chapter 12 of the report, or 1.6, Social Impacts, .8, Community Cohesion of the terms of reference, or at least what I have found as community in-cohesion.

Let me start with what is social cohesion. After searching multiple dictionaries looking up legal definitions and a general Google search, what I've come up with that most of them agree with is this: Social cohesion is a society who works towards the well-being of its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers members the opportunity of upward mobility.

Now, keeping this in mind, I did numerous other searches for statistics of the region. I used the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census, 2011 and '16. I used the Royal Australian Air Force website. I used several other NT government areas to come up with these figures and to check them for the stats and the figures that I'm about to quote you. Like I said, all the copies of that is here for you. Also, note that I have concentrated this only on the Katherine area, however as I have lived and worked all over this country and the world, I know Katherine is not unique to the issues I'm going to bring up.

The Katherine population fluctuates between 8,500 and 12,000 people. What seems to be constant, however, at least according to the census, is that approximately 25-27% of the population of Katherine are defence members and/or families and approximately 25.5% are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders ... and/or Torres Strait Islanders. Now, I know all places have their issues, and here in Katherine, we have our own share. So far, however, we've managed to keep the proverbial lid on it. Tensions here bubble to the



surface, and then quietly dissipate. However, at times, there are a lot said behind closed doors.

Katherine has been dealing with three major issues that threaten to explode at any given time. At least, that is what I've found for the 16 years I have lived here. These three issues are not spoken about in public, but only behind closed doors. Of course, there are other issues spoken about freely. The first issue is the issue of the haves and the have-nots. This is definitely not unique to Katherine, but can at times be very intrusive to life here. I'll give you one example of this. At a council meeting where people were stating they could not afford to pay another rate increase, and yes, it got quite heated at the time, people were already making decisions on what bills they could pay, and what they'd have to give up for that week, fortnight, or month.

At this time, it was mentioned that \$70,000 for a part time position was not enough to live on, and could not attract people to that position. There was also a comment that one person said that they earned double that. This was at a time when the average median income in Katherine was \$53,500 per year for full time work. That's at least according to the census. This is just one example of the haves not understanding the have-nots, and the issues that that caused.

The second issue is the black and white issue. This is a constant battle, at least behind closed doors, which bubbles just under the surface. This is one issue that I believe we will be looking at for some time, and the only reason it hasn't exploded yet is the fear of being branded a racist and/or legal prosecution, but is simmering just under the surface. The third issue is the defence versus civilian issue. Once again, this issue is huge and is on a constant bubble. There is a large amount spoken behind closed doors and especially at the moment with the PFAS/PFOS issue. It is truly simmering. Now, having seen this particular issue, defence versus civilian from both sides of the fence, I do understand why defence as a whole does not believe they have to worry or involve their selves in any one subject in the local area and why they don't take or get involved with issues that are important to the civilian population. However, being approximately 25% of the population here in Katherine, it has a huge impact on the decisions of Katherine.

Unfortunately, most of those decisions are not made with Katherine in mind. After all, they don't live here permanently. It's not their home, so why should it matter to them? Having said that, so far here in Katherine, all these issues have been, on the whole, kept under control. But now, we face a new issue, the issue of fracking, the unconventional oil and gas industry. They are now bullying their way into this. Things have changed in Katherine, and I hope this isn't the straw that finally breaks Katherine apart. Some points I would like you to consider are: There is a very large group of people in Katherine that fear this industry. There is a large group of people who are scared to say or do anything in public regarding this industry. People have been threatened with losing their jobs if they stand up or speak out. I



personally know one person who has lost their job because he did stand and speak out.

People have had gag orders placed on them. People have also been bought. The brown paper bags are out in force. Businesses who have stood up to support the anti-fracking view have been told to remove items or patronage will cease. They also have received abuse by those who are for this industry. Many now will not stand up publicly due to this. After all, they do have their livelihoods to protect. Now, you might ask, where is my scientific evidence. Well, unfortunately, at least my understanding of the law, although it has been pointed out to me that I may have this wrong, so I need to re-look at it, but my understanding was that unless I tape every conversation I have, and therefore I'm breaking the law, or I expose somebody else who is already in fear by naming them and expose them, then how can I prove it?

The fact that people are standing up, and these are people who have never stood up against anything before, are now standing up against this industry, should tell you that social incohesion is occurring. As I will not name or expose people, I will only state here my personal experiences. I have personally received multiple threats. I can't count them anymore. I have been constantly abused and downgraded. I have been offered bribes. I have had my personal property damaged. I have been refused service in businesses in Katherine. And all of this, just because I'm an anti-fracker and I have stood up. Before this issue, I had none of these issues here in Katherine before, however I had never, ever stood up for anything before either.

Just for the record, no, I did not accept the bribe or the bribes. I also know of at least three other people who have been offered bribes, and numerous people who have stood up against this industry, who have taken the same or very similar abuse. Now, your interim report refers to this issue once, and that's on page 94, Chapter 12.2. While I agree that the other issues raised are issues that also need to be looked into seriously, you also need to look at what is happening in the communities. After all, under the terms of reference for the inquiry, social impacts, which was 1.6, community cohesion is listed. I personally do not see an end to the abuse I'm receiving now. If anything, I see this will only escalate in the future. My warning is once you've backed someone into a corner, there are two possible outcomes. The first one is that person eventually doesn't get up. The second, they come out fighting. I'll let you decide and ponder which one you believe I come under, and for that matter, which one applies to the population as a whole.

My hope is this inquiry will take this into account seriously. As I keep saying, let's look at the big picture, the whole, complete picture. If you truly believe this industry has a social licence and there is only good social impacts, then let's put a referendum out there. Let us all have an open, honest, fair way where no fear of being outed, and no repercussions. Let's really find out who is right, and who is only deceiving or spreading misinformation. I personally don't see the light at the end of this tunnel. I believe we're in for



a long fight. And that has only just started. And I hope it doesn't come to total chaos.

In summing up, there is no perceived absence of social licence. There is quite simply no social licence. There is no social cohesion, but instead, this issue and this industry has and is causing major fractures within the community, and I believe will continue to fracture the community for as long as this industry continues to push and bully the residents of the community. While the threats of losing your job, being sued, and a multiple of other threats hang over people's heads, the social impacts are only just starting to show and crack to the surface. This must be seriously taken into account. Our community's lifestyles, health, country, and general way of life depend on that.

Now, I want to reiterate, this is my opinion, but if you ask people behind closed doors, taking away the threats that exist, I know you will find that what I have stated here to be true, and not perceived, or full of misinformation. I await your questions.

Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper:

Miss Raynor, thank you very much for that firsthand account. Good on you for standing up and coming here today, and obviously that entails a degree of bravery on your part, given what you've told us about the threats and personal abuse. So I commend you for stepping up and coming here today. Thank you very much. Any questions? Yes, Professor Hart?

Professor Hart:

The first question I have is you gave us, as you said, your experiences of those who are against fracking. Do you know whether the same occurs on the other side, those of who are for fracking being threatened or intimidated, or whatever?

Annette Raynor:

No, I don't. The people I know that are for it have never mentioned anything in that way, shape, or fashion to me, so I can't answer that honestly.

Professor Hart:

Okay. Can I also ask you ... You addressed the social cohesion situation. Very quickly, could you explain the basis of your objection to this particular industry?

Annette Raynor:

I think they've come out completely wrong. They will not answer a question straight. When they do answer a question that you pose to them, it's half true, and you can prove ... sorry. You can prove it's only half true. An industry that won't answer your questions, or will only answer half of the question with half the truth does not, in my opinion, deserve to be respected, let alone have a social licence.

Professor Hart:

Okay. Thanks for that, because I think that explains ... You made a comment that many people in Katherine fear the industry, do I take from that response that the fear is that they are not fully informed, the information transparency, those sorts of ...



- Annette Raynor: I don't think the fear's the fact that they're not fully informed, because we've had to go out and inform ourselves.
- Professor Hart: Okay.
- Annette Raynor: I think the fear is the losing your job, being pushed and gagged, being threatened. The fear of standing up in this town is monstrous. The amount of people that come past and will give you a quick sly thumbs up and keep running because they are scared to be seen, to even talk to an anti-fracker if you're being stood up, they're scared to even say hello to you on the street in case they have been grouped with you.
- Professor Hart: Yeah, yeah. So do people in Katherine really believe that fracking is going to occur here, or relatively close to here? Is it a personal thing there, is it just we don't like the industry?
- Annette Raynor: I think it's a bit of both.
- Professor Hart: Bit of both?
- Annette Raynor: I think it's previous local member was not the most approachable person, made it ... There was fracking happening 50ks in a straight line from here. I personally have got a licence pending over my property. Now, whether that ever goes ahead or not's another thing, but I only live 16ks from the post office via road so I'm not out in the sticks.
- Professor Hart: No.
- Annette Raynor: It's not just Katherine. It is the whole industry. If you want to put it down and hide it somewhere, we then go, "Well, who's going to monitor it?" It's out in the sticks. You can't get the politicians past the Noonamah line as it is, the Berrimah line. They won't come to Katherine because it's too far. What makes you think they're going to go down the road and out in the bush to monitor and watch it? We've all seen it happen before.
- Professor Hart: Yeah. You probably know that we have the capacity for recommending, at least, so-called no-go zones. Yeah, the obvious ones would be national parks and the like, but what would you say, if in fact we recommended a no-go zone some distance around Katherine? Would that assist the situation or not?
- Annette Raynor: I don't think it would stop the fear simply because, to me, that wouldn't solve the multiple of issues that I see with this industry. It wouldn't stop me from being against this industry. Therefore, it's not taking away the fact that I'm still going to be abused because I stood up and said I'm against it.
- Professor Hart: Right. Thank you.
- Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper: Yes, Dr. Anderson?



- Dr. Anderson: Thanks, Miss Raynor. I just wanted to follow up on your comments about fear for standing up, because the panel's been led to believe that the vast majority of people in Katherine actually oppose fracking. So when you first started talking about standing up, I thought you meant people who were supporting fracking. I just wonder if you can comment on that, and maybe give us your perception of what proportion of the Katherine population support fracking, and what proportion against fracking?
- Annette Raynor: The only way I can personally state those figures is by what I have ... the petitions I've collected and the march that we've been on, and everything else. I personally know I sat down to try to work it out. I personally know 15 people for this. However, I personally know 306, I think I worked it out to be, people against this.
- Dr. Anderson: ... so why anti-fracking people. I would've thought it would be the pro-fracking people who would be fearful of standing up and being ostracised or whatever.
- Annette Raynor: When you're in business and you own the town, you can do what you like. You've also got to remember that this town is employed, a large percentage of us are employed by the government as well.
- Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper: Okay. Thank you, again, very much for coming here today. If you could just give your copy of your paper to one of those two individuals at the back table, we'd be very grateful for that. As I said, thank you again for coming here and speaking your mind. It's invaluable, that firsthand experience is really invaluable, and often we don't get it. Often, we have people who purport to speak on behalf of other people ...