

Good morning to the Inquiry Chair, Justice Pepper and everybody that is here with us today or observing via live stream for the public hearings for the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing of Onshore Unconventional Reservoirs in the Northern Territory.

My presentation this morning is only brief, and I am addressing this Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing from a non-scientific background, in layman's terms that are understood within the Pastoral Industry and on Behalf of a 4th Generation Family owned and operated Cattle Station.

National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) are required to notify authorities of cattle movements, whether it be moving the stock to sale, agistment or relocation. If any anomalies are detected in our beef at any point along the supply chain, the authorities can trace the product back to the specific property and even the specific paddock.

Cattle Producers, across Central Northern Territory are fortunate to be able to say, we produce and have the ability to produce Organic, Grass Fed, Beef for our chosen markets. We have the capacity to produce a product (cattle) for Live Export, Store Markets, Feed Lots, Stud Stock, Local Meatworks and the like, that is free from any form of Hormone Growth Promotants, Drenches, Injections, Sprays or Antibiotics. ~~Australian producers, through the~~

Not only that, we can say that they, the cattle, are grazing on Pastures that are free from Fertilizers, Sprays, Defoliants, Insecticides and the like.

When I extend the fact, that in Central Australia, we can produce a Quality, Clean, Organic, Free Range Product one step further, I am at the point where I address water quality.

This is where my question to you, Justice Pepper and the Scientific Inquiry sits.

Up until this point Pastoralists have been in control of what their cattle eat - pastures free from chemical, Breathing clean fresh air and now with Hydraulic Fracturing occurring within our Properties - we have lost control of assuring that our water remains free from chemical residue.

Given that Cattle Producers are in an industry, in Central Australia, that delivers Clean, Organic Beef to Australia and Markets all over the world; what ramifications do you see for our industry, if Well Integrity, through Hydraulic Fracturing, is compromised and our water supply is no longer delivering water to our stock that is free from Chemical Residue?

Amber Driver
Elkedra Pastoral Company.
Alice Springs

Submission to the **Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracking of Onshore Unconventional Reservoirs in the Northern Territory** (August 2017)

by Domenico Pecorari, practising architect and resident of Alice Springs since 1984.

I must declare from the outset that, from all I have read and seen on the matter, I am of the considered opinion that “fracking” is detrimental to the natural environment in general, that it threatens both the quantity and quality of the water supply of our communities, that it will have negative impacts on our existing pastoral and tourism industries, all the while presenting little economic benefits to the Territory, with most profits serving the interests of overseas shareholders.

But it is not these issues I wish to talk of today, but the social impacts I believe fracking will have on the makeup of our communities.

Prior to coming to Alice Springs, nearly thirty-three years ago now, I was offered a lucrative position effectively running an architectural practice in Mount Isa, Queensland. Although the benefits to my then shaky financial situation and career were obvious, I turned it down. I simply could not get over the “metallic” stench from the mining stacks that all too often wafted over me, and no matter what I was being told by the locals, I remained unconvinced that it could not possibly be detrimental to my health. Today, Mt Isa has a “Living With Lead Alliance”, by which I am reminded that I made the right choice at the time.

Soon after my Mount Isa experience, I undertook a 3-month contract in an architectural practice in Alice Springs, and the contrast to my experience in Mt Isa could not have been more dramatic. When asked “Why Alice?” by family and friends back in Perth, I’d say: “It’s so clean”, paraphrasing Peter O’Toole’s character in the film “Lawrence of Arabia”.

And it was, with clear blue skies of clean air; a good, clean and plentiful artesian water supply; and an unspoilt ancient natural landscape that promoted an ideal lifestyle.

It didn’t take long to decide that I could spend the rest of my life in the town, which became a reality after convincing my then fiancée, a practising doctor, to join me. She too believed that The Alice would be a great place to raise a family, as indeed it has proven to be.

In recent years, however, with the threats - firstly of the proposed uranium mine over our drinking water just twenty kilometres out of town, then that of the proposed radioactive dump in Tennant Creek and now the proposal to allow gas fracking over practically most of the Territory landmass - we are seriously re-assessing our commitment to the Territory and considering alternative places to live out our latter years.

My wife and I have already reached a decision: If Fracking gets the “go-ahead”, we will be selling up and leaving Alice Springs for a place that values living in a clean environment as the most important consideration in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

We know of other professionals in town having similar thoughts and can’t help think of the drain this will have on centres like Alice Springs, reputedly a town with one of the highest number of PhD-qualified residents in Australia.

It is generally difficult to recruit professionals to regional centres, but those that make the change do so for the same lifestyle reasons my wife and I did, over thirty-three years ago.

The environmental changes that will be brought about by fracking, both real and perceived, will make the case for moving to the Territory that much more difficult without the enticements that professionals appreciate, over and above mere financial gain.

And once that attraction is lost, as it will through fracking, it will be lost for ever.
