

**From:** Lauren Mellor  
**To:** [fracking inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Email for Justice Pepper re Tennant Creek hearings  
**Date:** Monday, 14 August 2017 8:30:31 PM

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To whom it may concern;

Please ensure that Justice Pepper receives the email below.

Kind regards,

Lauren  
[REDACTED]

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14 August 2017

Dear Justice Pepper,

I write to clarify the circumstances around Dianne Stokes scheduled appearance at the Tennant Creek hearings last week.

It is unfortunate that the Inquiry team experienced some difficulties in scheduling Dianne Stokes to address the Panel by phone both prior to and on the day of the hearing. As I mentioned she could not attend in person, due the venue being off limits to Waramungu people following a death nearby earlier this year, and she is regularly living outside of town without phone reception.

I had worked collaboratively with the Inquiry's [REDACTED] in the lead up to the hearings to find a way that Dianne could present her evidence and liaised with Dianne where possible when the Inquiry was unable to. I understand the inability to communicate directly with Dianne would have been a source of frustration and inconvenience to the Inquiry team, however I think in the circumstances there should have been a way for Dianne's scheduled time to be met.

My understanding from speaking with [REDACTED] and Dianne Stokes the day prior to the hearing was that she would be scheduled last on the day, and the Inquiry team would dial her in. I was present at the hearings in time to liaise with Dianne just prior to her scheduling to ensure she would be available on the phone, which she was. As I was helping to drive people from Elliot down to Tennant for the hearing on Thursday morning I was unaware of any changes that may have been made in the meantime.

I will meet with Dianne Stokes against this week to try and work out another way she can

provide evidence to the panel in coming weeks.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work you are doing to try and reach out to as many Territorians as possible as part of this Fracking Inquiry process. There are real and complex barriers to many Territorians participation in the Inquiry process that have implications for the possibility of a fair and robust Inquiry.

Particularly in regional and remote areas the barriers to participation include low English literacy, a lack of familiarisation with the Inquiry format, work or CDP and welfare obligations, health concerns such as dialysis requirements preventing travel and the fact that many people simply don't feel confident speaking in the public forums.

The Territory Frack Free Alliance is doing all we can to attempt to address this imbalance and ensure Territorians who have relevant information that can assist the Inquiry in its deliberations are able to present. We are working double time to overcome these barriers by providing things like transport assistance to consultations and hearings, IT support to enable people to present their evidence, and promoting opportunities to speak to the Inquiry through all mediums.

As we have attempted to bring up with the Panel's administrative team several times, this work is made more difficult by lack of appropriate notice for meetings, and the tight scheduling timeframes which mean we are regularly required to drive late at night on remote roads to provide the assistance required in each community during the Inquiry process.

I do hope that you can see we are doing our utmost, with our own very limited resourcing, to reduce the barriers to participation in this Inquiry that many people face. Despite this, there are still going to be unforeseen circumstances and logistical difficulties that will at times inconvenience the Panel. I am troubled by the apparent hostile reaction to my enquiry regarding the changed scheduling. I would simply ask that there is greater consideration given to these circumstances and that we can have respectful, open dialogue with those who are simply trying to ensure people have equal access to participate in the Inquiry.

Sincerely,

Lauren