

TO THE PANEL MEMBERS NT FRACKING INQUIRY

Attn: Dr David Ritchie. 12/02/2018.

I write to express my concerns at any lifting of the present MORATORIUM on Fracking in the Northern Territory. My concerns centre around the educational levels of the Indigenous People living in the Beetaloo sub-basin proposed exploration and production area of the NT. (Indigenous communities in this region: Barunga, Beswick, Mataranka, Jilkminggan, Minyerri, Ngukurr, Central Beetaloo, Eley Station, Elliott, Larrimah, Daly waters, Dunmarra, Newcastle Waters (Marlinja), Robinson River, Borooloola and the larger culturally mixed towns of Katherine and Tennant Creek). I see 'reasonable' levels of Literacy and Numeracy as a **prerequisite** to equal participation in the many negotiating procedures and meetings between these people and Mining companies interested in fracking. Without a reasonable level of English Reading/ Writing and Western Maths, job opportunities in the Fracking Industry would be low or negligible.

In expressing these concerns, I draw on my experience as a Primary Teacher and Adult Educator in the NT over the past 30 years. Much of this time was spent either living in Indigenous communities or visiting them on a regular basis. Though now retired, my overall impression of my teaching days is of the very low English Literacy and Numeracy levels of most Indigenous people. Now there may be some gains here and there and some people of the bye-gone Missionary era have stronger general educational levels, however, overall Literacy and Numeracy levels remain around a Yr 3 or 4 Primary School level...or in some communities below! This situation would suggest that in terms of mining access agreements and ensuing negotiations there is definitely not an equal 'playing field'. (I do not wish to cast aspersions of the quality of teaching in Aboriginal Education in the NT but am simply stating the present difficulties of developing a strong cultural/political pedagogy that 'works' in these schools, a pedagogy that would, I feel, make incredible differences in the present dislocated lives of our Indigenous peoples in the NT). Consequent of the low educational levels job opportunities in the fracking industry remain very low, especially of a technical nature.

It is my contention, and in this I am in agreement with one of the recommendations from The Coffey **Summary Report for the Beetaloo sub-basin Social Impact Assessment**, 4.1 p.12), that 'inclusive, well-informed engagement with affected communities is critical to achieve a **social licence to operate**'. Recommendation 5, from the same report, goes on to state that..'Shale gas proponents implement awareness and education programs for affected communities that provide basic information on unconventional gas development. Its impacts and their management before undertaking exploration and extraction'. Social impacts would include the granting of **royalties** to Traditional Owner groups and any others involved and though the use of royalty monies is a private concern, I feel that issues that arise out of granting royalties need to be looked at by these communities and the Land Councils. Some of these issues would include alcohol abuse and the domestic violence that can arise from this along with jealousies and divisions created through the individual granting of royalties. Mining groups in their negotiations would be aware of these social issues but perhaps it would be going too far here to state that royalties generally amount to little more than a form of 'bribing'! Royalties have been flowing into the communities of Gove, Jabiru,

Borooloola, Tennant Creek for many many years and it would be interesting to get the views of the affected Aboriginal families in the Beetaloo sub-basin region, re the granting of royalties.

Attachment A from the Appendix of the Beetaloo sub-basin Social Impact Assessment Case Study (d) in reference to what **The International Association for Impact Assessment** defines as a 'social impact' states that one would have to be very careful around the area of 'political systems – the extent to which a people are able to participate in decisions that affect their lives, the levels of democratisation that is taking place and the resources provided for this purpose'. I strongly agree with this especially when one considers that the far majority of people living in the Beetaloo sub-basin region are Aboriginal. Surely the historically hard earned democratic principle of 'one man – one vote' would mean that all care needs to be taken in terms of any social impacts to these peoples. Although all risks around Shale GAS Fracking such as the involved aquifers, seismic formations, run-off pollution, green house gas emissions and the further issue of threatened species are extremely worthy of the this Panels inquiries, I believe it is the social impacts on the Indigenous peoples of the Beetaloo basin that should reign paramount! Of course all of these stated risks are strongly inter-connected.

If I was to propose any 'fixes' to the above issues I would suggest to the Inquiry Panel the following:

- In any negotiations re Shale Gas Fracking 'schools' lasting a 4 to 6 week period be set up by the Mining companies and Land Councils to teach all technical/legal aspects of the fracking industry as related to a particular community. Community members to attend these 'schools' would be chosen by the Traditional Owners and hopefully would have representatives from the various language/cultural groups within that given community. The use and selection of AIS Interpreters in these 'schools' would be very important. A special group of Interpreters would need to be prepared beforehand to understand the technical and scientific nature of fracking. All costs for these schools to be born by the mining companies.
- A panel be set up by the NT Government (akin to this present Fracking Inquiry) to explore all issues around mining in the NT as it affects Aboriginal people. Educational issues and their consequences as regards employment pathways and social impacts would be fully explored. This Panel would be far more expansive and 'ground-braking' than the Coffey Research that has added some weight to the present Inquiries.

Sincerely, Sean Ryan, Master of Education Darwin University and long-standing NT citizen.

If any further queries arise from above please email [REDACTED] or call mob: [REDACTED]

