



Darwin - Climate Action Darwin

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Darwin Convention Centre, Darwin

Speaker: Grusha Leeman

Grusha Leeman: My name is Grusha Leeman, I'm here representing Climate Action Darwin.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Can you speak into the microphone please or just move the whole thing towards you, if that's okay, the microphone, that is. Wonderful, thanks, otherwise you won't be picked up on the recording, thank you.

Grusha Leeman: Legs in the way. Is that better?

Hon. Justice Pepper: Yes, that's much better, thank you.

Grusha Leeman: Okay, firstly I'd like to thank you for taking time to listen to me representing the local community group, Climate Action Darwin. We represent thousands of Territorians and [inaudible 00:00:42] I'm going to be focusing on the greenhouse gas emissions.

Rather than tune your recommendations to make mega cuts to the climate burden, I'll again try to explain why fracking is unacceptable for our climate. I'll outline why we just cannot consider any more extraction of gas from the NT or anywhere else in the world for that matter. Can you move to the next one? Have I got a-

Hon. Justice Pepper: There should be a clicker just there. I think if you point it more towards that way rather than at the screen, yeah, that seems to work better. Like that, that's it.

Grusha Leeman: Okay, so globally greenhouse gas emissions are still rising. There has been the Paris agreement, but there is still a huge gap between the Paris climate change goals and reality. The current pledges that the world has faithfully put together, we're only about a third of what we need to stay below two degrees warming. Even if the current pledges are a total success, though, it still leaves the world on track for a temperature of more than three degrees, you can see on the picture. That would be horrendous.

Three degrees represents progress though, because the business as usual scenario, where we have say, shale gas fracking in the NT would be more like five degrees and above, which isn't worth talking about really. For a reasonable chance of staying under two degrees, the global greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2020 and the pledge gap must be closed by 2030.



You'll note on the picture we have a sharp downward decline from 2020 and that slope goes steeper and further the further we delay it, every year we don't do anything we have to make the decline faster if we want to keep up with the [inaudible 00:02:46].

Concerningly late last year, it was revealed that the pledges made under the Paris accord would not produce warming of around three degrees, but closer to or even above four degrees. It's all underestimated, it's all worse than was thought. The warming would [inaudible 00:03:08] feedback loops, so even if we think it's bad then it will compound on itself because some of the most significant feedback loops, [inaudible 00:03:13] in the Arctic, if the permafrost thaws, because then the system itself will continue to drive the climate change.

There is at least as much organic carbon locked in the permafrost as the world has burned from fossil fuels since the industrial age began. It's way beyond. The consensus figure for the irreversible melting of Greenland is at 1.6 degrees and west Antarctica is not far ahead.

I don't know if you can see we're nearly up to 1.6 degrees in the picture. It will bring catastrophic sea level rise. Global temperatures are already sometimes intolerably hot, as we might know, most of you from down south, yeah, intolerably hot. The wonderful news is that it can remain that way, merely sometimes intolerably hot, but only if we follow the yellow path with a low emissions scenario.

The yellow paths are the most challenging and will take some outstanding and courageous leadership, which I'm really hoping that you can find. The fossil fuel industry will have to be speedily and entirely phased down. Fracking the NT is following the red path, going straight up and we'll quickly see global temperatures becoming increasingly intolerable in the lives of today's children. Intolerable.

You may have noticed I haven't been talking about 1.5 degrees, which is usually associated with the Paris agreement, that's because 1.5 degrees is no longer possible. It's really quite depressing to say, because the world is as much more hospitable to us if we can keep below 1.5 degrees. Even worse than that, I mean not worse, but maybe, our chances of failing for two degrees are about 95%. That 5% isn't a random chance, it's our choice, it's what we're doing here today, we've got a 5% choice.

Realistically, unless emissions start to come down very rapidly in the next three to four years, very rapidly, then we will also fail the two degrees centigrade warming. We urgently have to take some very rapid and radical changes. We've chosen to fail so far, but we could choose to succeed, let's do that.

Keeping global warming below two degrees is a choice, one that we have to make fast. What we have to do is understand that we simply cannot frack anymore. In Australia, as Andrew said, carbon emissions have increased again, 0.7% last financial year. That was blamed on an increase in gas



production and exports. That comes on the back of 0.8% increase the year before, which was accompanied with the warning that we're not on track for our Paris to meet our 2030 emissions reduction target.

We are the ones with the responsibility to reduce that pollution, to follow those blue and red lines, going up to 2030 down the bottom there, bottom right hand side, we can't have any more fossil fuel projects if we want to follow those red and blue lines. We're in the critical window of opportunity to act on climate change. We need our emissions to be falling starting this year. See the 2018, it starts 2017. It needs to start.

Paris isn't something that we've achieved or that is done by the government, it's something that we all have to contribute to. Me, I'm cutting back on my flying and my high emissions foods and I'm hoping that you're listening to what we have to do about greenhouse gas emissions and ban fracking.

New shale gas fracking would add a huge contribution to the greenhouse gas emissions, right when we should be lowering them. It does state in your draft final report that we have a challenging task. The Australian emissions require to be reduced by about 1000 megatons of carbon dioxide equivalents between 2021 and 2030.

To achieve this, it means we have to cut Australia's carbon emissions this decade. We cannot increase them. The abatement level required to fulfil the Paris agreement is now so great that some have estimated that we could take all the cars off the roads or take all the cows off all the farms immediately. It isn't a game anymore. It's going to require a mammoth effort.

If we're to be confident about avoiding the dangerous climate change, the inevitable conclusion is that there is no room for new fossil fuel developments. The window for opportunity for transition fuels was last century. Gas, it's now passed and a zero emissions energy sources are now the only defensible option.

We need to focus on the nearby and the near term. That's global warming potential for 20 years, which is 86 for the methane and in the Northern Territory, this is the jurisdiction making this important decision, so this is where we can make the difference that we need. It's possible on current trends that we won't cross the 1.5 degree threshold until the 2040s. We will cross it, but the greenhouse gas emissions that guarantee that outcome will have been released within the next 10 to 15 years. The shale gas currently kept safe underground in the Northern Territory could be a part of these greenhouse gas emissions, or we could ban fracking as a logical way to avoid catastrophic climate change.

The Northern Territory is extremely vulnerable to climate change, as I've told you before. Our seas give us more extreme cyclones when they're even warmer and they rise twice as far elsewhere. Undeniably, we're on track to 308 days a year over 35 degrees, horrid.



Our climate is already too polluted to withstand more fracking, so let's be wise like Victoria, where they had their fracking inquiry and they concluded that unconventional gas is not a renewable source of energy, it is polluting and it contributes to climate change and it's not required as a fuel to transition between fossil fuels and renewables. They know that an apparent ban on unconventional gas activities would also ensure that the fugitive emissions would not be a contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. It's the only way to ensure it.

Along with the majority of the contributors to this inquiry and the majority of residents of the Northern Territory, and on behalf of Climate Action Darwin, I request the panel to alter its recommendations that fracking is safe and instead outline alternatives. Fracking is not safe for the climate, so let's ban it.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Thank you very much, are there any questions from the panel? Yes, Dr. Beck.

Dr. Vaughan Beck: If I could respond. Firstly, thank you very much for your detailed presentation. It's been said before, but it's useful to say again that, as a panel, we accept the issue of climate change science and as individuals we also are of that mind as well, so collectively and individually. We understand the issues that you have clearly articulated and they are real and serious.

As I started to try to articulate previously, it's difficult in this exercise to look at one industry in isolation, because we're looking at both national and global initiatives that are designed to try to bring down the emissions. As is stated in the report, it is a challenging task. It's not an easy task. We well understand the difficulties. In looking at one industry and saying, "This is going to contribute x percent"

Grusha Leeman: That's what we're looking at though, today.

Dr. Vaughan Beck: I understand, but equally, the panel doesn't have, within its terms of reference to look beyond that.

Grusha Leeman: We need reductions on all levels of our lives. We need to reduce the amount we fly, we need to reduce the amount of children we have. We need to do a lot of things in every aspect. I'm not saying that that's the only thing that needs to be done at all.

Dr. Vaughan Beck: No, and I appreciate that. Acting locally and individually is an important consideration. Can I say it's a very difficult conundrum, because we've asked to look at one industry and we've been not asked to consider the totality of the initiatives that are being undertaken either nationally...

Grusha Leeman: But If every department questioned what should we do about this and we say, oh someone else can do it, not us, yeah, that's not very fair, is it? I think it should be done ... It's not like I'm saying ban all fossil fuels, I'm just saying ban new shale gas, yeah, so therefore, across the board of other things, maybe we could bring our greenhouse gas emissions down. We can only



look at what we're looking at. That doesn't mean that everything else is irrelevant.

Dr. Vaughan Beck: No, and so I understand your point, and you're making it very heartfelt, but you're also basing it on data too, so points are very well articulated and understood. In part, it then becomes back to the political decision making process as to what happens. It can be done on an individual basis, but there are also the politics, because on a national basis, there are a plethora of policies that are in place and are being put in place at least to achieve the Paris accord targets but..

Grusha Leeman: It's failing, we need to try harder.

Dr. Vaughan Beck: I understand.

Grusha Leeman: I'm appealing to you and your expertise to listen and to understand that we've been failing and we need to stop now.

Dr. Vaughan Beck: Your point is well made.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Thank you, any further questions? All right, again, thank you Climate Action Darwin and yourself, Ms Leeman for coming here and providing us with another presentation, again, thank you.

Grusha Leeman: We've put in a written submission as well.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Okay, oh good, okay excellent. I'll look out for that. We've been travelling all last week.

Grusha Leeman: Yes, I'm sorry.

Hon. Justice Pepper: No, I'm not being critical by any means, it's more an explanation on our part as to, if we didn't make reference to it, it's because we've been travelling and we may not have actually read it yet, but it will be read.

Grusha Leeman: I wouldn't have expected to read it yet, but yeah.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Thank you very much. All right.