

Submission to Hawke inquiry into fracking

My objections to the fracking of the Territory's landscape are as follows:

A. The CLP Government is railroading the fracking process on the Territory and is already issuing exploration licences. This hell-bent rush raises serious questions relating to process and propriety.

B. Your inquiry has extremely weak terms of reference if the Government's Media Release of 19 March, 2014 is any guide:

"The inquiry will result in recommendations on whether steps should be taken to mitigate any potential impacts from fracking."

C. Massive offshore gas fields are being developed for overseas markets so why is it necessary to exploit onshore reserves at this time? Does this country have to exhaust every known resource simultaneously, leaving following generations to make do with leftovers? Will the addition of shale gas merely glut the market and depress prices for multi-nationals selling the gas overseas?

D. The onset of renewables has been tendered as a reason to frack for shale before renewables are readily available in a few years time. This is a self-serving rationale to denude the landscape of its gas reserves largely for the benefit of overseas investors. With the development of renewables we preserve both the landscape and our shale gas for potential future use.

E. The Minister for Lands and Planning, Peter Chandler, signed off on the Katherine new Land Use Plan on the 16th June last. He stated:

"Katherine will grow as a regional hub for mining, agriculture and defence and its important that this growth is underpinned with good planning. The plan makes special mention of the importance of protecting the conservation, heritage and landscape values of the region."

How do invasive industrial gasfields mesh with these intentions?

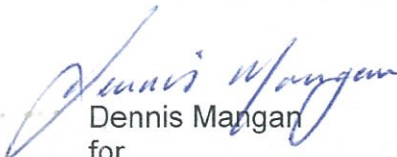
F. The Environmental Protection Authority lacks the funding and capacity to effectively supervise the industrial juggernaut which is the unconventional shale gas industry. As well, Government can too easily restrain its watchdogs by the expedient of underfunding or by limiting their powers.

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G. Since the long-term effects of hydraulic fracturing are unknown, how can we justify the widespread disruption of the landscape's sub-stratas without the safety science to support this destabilising activity?

H. My further concerns regarding the fracking process are best summarized in the following ten points contained in a 'Don't Frack Katherine' pamphlet:

1. Air pollution from a wide range of hazardous air pollutants released from wells and infrastructure.
2. Loss of large areas of farmland and bushland for well pads, pipelines and roads.
3. Fugitive emissions from leaks in wells, pipes and infrastructure.
4. Contamination of underground water resources due to well casing failure.
5. Soil and water pollution from spills, leakage and overflow of toxic wastewater.
6. Soil and groundwater contamination from reinjection of poorly treated or untreated wastewater.
7. Pollution of waterways from wastewater and chemical spills and release of poorly treated wastewater.
8. Migration of gas and toxic substances into groundwater through natural faults and fracking induced pathways.
9. Water, soil and crop contamination from re-use of poorly treated or untreated wastewater on farmland.
10. Noise and air pollution from trucks, drill rigs and machinery.


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for
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