



Darwin - Rachel Tumminello

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Speaker: Rachel Tumminello

Rachel Tumminello: Hi, yes, I'm Rachel Tumminello, and I'm just appearing as a born and bred Darwinite.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Thank you very much. When you're ready.

Rachel Tumminello: Thank you. I'll be short, I don't have a lot, I've just a couple of comments on the ... That, very long extensive document. Thank you for all your work. I haven't been able to read all of it, there is a lot of it. Firstly, just before I get to that, just quickly, just to note in terms of public trust in the government, to be able to actually take on board any kind of regulatory processes or monitoring assessments. Just in December, the ABC news reported an issue with the McArthur River Mine, where they dumped a whole lot of rocks in the wrong place, causing all this chemical reaction and plumes of sulphuric whatever in the air, not good stuff. The concern with this I think is that this is dealt with verbally. It says in the report, in the news article, there's no written report of that. When I read that, I was like, wow my child care centre has stricter regulations than that. My child falls over, when I get there I am given a verbal report, there's a written report in their folder, and they go through and advise me on any policies and procedures and what they've done, and what they're going to do in the future. So it concerns me, that we don't even do that on this much larger scale of potential toxic emissions into the environment.

Rachel Tumminello: I think it indicates that in terms of any kind of increasing our processes to have better transparency and accountability of being able to track actually what happens in these mine sites, so that people can actually review how well everything's going. If things aren't even written down, how can we do that? How do we ever have access to a trial? To be able to monitor that and improve it? What it also says to me is that recommendations on implementing new procedures is not enough, that this requires cultural change within the government and within the mining industry. When we talk about it like trust from the public, to this industry and the overwhelming opposition to this industry going ahead. As you have heard throughout, a lot of your submissions and the public open hearings that you have had, is the legacy of mining. Locals, particularly long term locals, and the intergenerational locals, they're really quite aware of this, and they have no trust in this, and then you have something like this, just in December, and it



says we're not ... It questions the capability of this even being able to happen. This kind of cultural change being able to occur between our governments and mining companies and communities working together.

Rachel Tumminello: Onto the points, just a couple of minor points, well, as in not big extensive ones like Naomi's submission covered. I found it a little bit difficult to balance how you used some of the literature, so sorry, directly referring to the chapter on social impacts.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Thank you.

Rachel Tumminello: Yup. Probably should have said that at the front. Let me put my glasses on. On page 74 there was a little bit of emphasis on the potential benefits to come.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Sorry, which page was that?

Rachel Tumminello: Page 274.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Page 274, thank you. Yes, go ahead.

Rachel Tumminello: There's an emphasis, or I read it, the way it comes across to me in terms of balance, how you ... How things are talked about in the sentences, how many arguments are made, that I read this as there's an emphasis on the potential benefits to come on local children being able to return home with uni degrees to find work in their local areas. That's a reference, that comes from a reference that is used. I looked up that reference and I was disturbed to read it's actually a statement made by Queensland member of parliament, in a house of representative. I don't know what the stats were to support his statement, and I find that the heavy emphasis on that potentiality is unwarranted without any kind of statistical support for that.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Which footnote are you referring to?

Rachel Tumminello: Sorry?

Hon. Justice Pepper: Sorry, again, just so I can track this down later, which footnote are you referring to?

Rachel Tumminello: Oh yes sorry, I have written that down. I think it's 32?

Hon. Justice Pepper: Thank you, great.

Rachel Tumminello: Yup.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Okay, thank you.

Rachel Tumminello: It comes from the Queensland Gas Fields Commission 2017, which when I finally got that down, I had to look around for the references. When I looked



at that report, it's actually just a ... It's like a statement made by the minister. It doesn't refer to any actual kind of data.

Hon. Justice Pepper: No, thank you. We'll chase that down.

Rachel Tumminello: And then on page 278, there's a use of Normand. A reference Normand 2016, it's near the top of the page. I didn't write the number of that one down, but it's up at the very top of the page. Which suggests ... Used this paper to suggest this industry can provide unique opportunities for younger generations and remote communities. So I looked at that reference, and in actuality fact, that paper highlights that there is a disconnect between what mining companies say they're going to do in employing local people and the stats of what they actually do. Also too, this reference is very specific to indigenous populations. I'm a bit concerned that there is this implication that can be used more broadly to say younger generations, I think it's a little bit disingenuous. The reason I call out these things is because, when you return to the earlier chapter, sorry, it's very difficult when you're trying to look at the social impact stuff because they need to connect across everything, it's hard to track everything across the ... You have to organise it somehow, it just means it's not always in ways that you can follow. This is the chapter on health impacts, I think it is?

Hon. Justice Pepper: Chapter 10, yes.

Rachel Tumminello: Yup, okay, I can't find the page here. On page 240, when we talk about the impact on social cohesiveness, mental health and well-being. What it says here is that it's been unable to find any potent evidence that supports an evaluation of the magnitude of this risk. I'm not quite sure what that means because, sure, there's actually very little research on it, and that's actually a very major issue. I'm not quite sure what the implication of that is, in just saying well we can't really find it. Also too, that panel further notes that some of the submissions from industries suggest more positive effects on well-being, it says here that with improved employment opportunities, improved social benefits and facilities, etc. When you come back to the social impact assessment, you can see that the final sentence has been picked up in an attempt to make an argument for improved local employment. I think it's rather tenuous, I think it's kind of quite optimistic and not really grounded in a lot of matched data. I find the lack of dealing with effect that there is going to be, that there is already, fracking industry is already started, it doesn't start when the world's going, we're already in it now yes? There is a particular social, psychological impact, and I think that that's really critical. I know a lot of the submissions because I actually read a lot of them, because they're actually really interesting.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Good.

Rachel Tumminello: That the connection to land and identity is really critical. That kind of underscores who we are as people, and I don't know, I'm sorry I don't know the background of all of you, I don't know who of you are Territorians or not, or where you come from.



Hon. Justice Pepper: It's all, all that information is on the website, the CV's for all of the panel.

Rachel Tumminello: Yes, unfortunately I read that last year and I don't remember it.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Fair enough.

Rachel Tumminello: A lot of Territorians, whatever they're cultural backgrounds, but long term Territorians were quite a breed, as I'm sure many people are in many places. Identity is what underscores human being and social cohesiveness and how we do things. When people are saying that we're concerned about what this is going to look like, without even talking about the risks of the water contamination, what this is going to look like across the NT, and not even what it's going to look like, but what we might know, even if we can't see it because we might not live in that particular area, that is a real erosion of who we are as Territorians. It's a real erosion of who the territory is in relationship to Australia. I realise that this is really difficult to explain and difficult for you to even incorporate, given the focus in terms of regulatory and risk mitigation, and things like that. We're talking about really fundamental issues here, and who we are as people. I can't emphasize enough that that underscores everything, and it's really important.

You have mentioned that it does threaten or raises issues for an entity and things like this, but I'm social science, that's my background. For me, the social comes before the technological. It's about my priorities, obviously, potentially different. I realise that some people will say that we can't have social if we don't have economic, and if we don't have jobs and money and things like that, but what is not being addressed, because it's not your remit and that's perfectly fine, is that there are many other opportunities for creating economic boom in the NT and we could be looking forward into different industries than what we currently have, than this option, and that this option is particularly damaging to other industries. I know that you've seen a lot of reports on that, the potential damage this industry is going to cause to pastoralist, to tourists, which is also under reported, and I realise you also note that there isn't actually a lot of research on that. Tourism operators are really concerned about this. You go down to the Mitchell street backpackers and you talk to all of these people. The NT has an incredible reputation and is revered in so many countries, people flock here from all over the place, especially Europe that has lost so much of the natural environment. They come here for the wildness, they come here for this idea of who we are.

And broad scale fracking is going, or hydraulic fracking is going to destroy that. So we are thinking long term, we're not thinking what's our income for the next twenty years, we're thinking, who are we going into the future. And when people are concerned about climate change, we're talking 80 years, we're talking 100 years, we're talking 250 years. The people who are really concerned are thinking big. That's what we need to do, and I'm sorry that it's not in your terms of reference, but I have to express that because it's how we're going to survive into the future, and who are we going to be. We want to be healthy, and whole and in a beautiful environment, engaged in



industries that are supported and forward thinking, and that build communities, that build cohesion. I didn't actually plan that rant, sorry.

Hon. Justice Pepper: It was very insightful, thank you.

Rachel Tumminello: No worries. One last point, sorry I hope I haven't gone over time, because that was not timed. Page 280, so back in the social impact section. There again, it's about this balance in here, and I understand your role is to look for a balance and objective viewpoint, and that's great. But I did find that there was an emphasis on the people who felt ... there was a discussion on that page about people's reactions to this process and how people were feeling disempowered and threatened because either they were for fracking and felt like those people against them, or discriminating against, or whatever, either direction, do you get what I mean?

Hon. Justice Pepper: We'll look it up, yep.

Rachel Tumminello: There is a phrase here that I found interesting called these anti-fracking activists. I'm not entirely sure what that means, given that I'm just a member of the community and most people I know who are quite anti-fracking aren't activists, we're actually just people in the community, and who are highly disturbed by this. We don't always know what to make of it. It doesn't matter if you have wonderful regulation if one well breaks out of ten thousand, then that well is over an important aquifer, what does that mean? Is it cumulative impacts of toxins? I'm not saying I know that, I'm just saying. Also that your own stats on the submissions, that you provide at the beginning of that section, really state the significant majority of submissions were highly concerned and probably phrased as not really supportive of fracking. Yet, your emphasis in those discussions how the people against fracking are really kind of like causing problems. Now I know you don't state that ...

Hon. Justice Pepper: Not we don't.

Rachel Tumminello: I understand Doctor Pepper, sorry Justice Pepper but it's about how you read it. It's about the perception and implication of the people reading it. When I read this, I felt the impression was that people who were concerned about fracking were actually causing problems. A lot of the recommendations about increasing the social licence and that is all about getting us on board, as opposed to how we can co-govern this kind of issue. It also fails to acknowledge, and maybe it's because it wasn't in the submissions and therefore completely fair enough, but it does fail to address the fact that the mining companies offer an extreme amount of disinformation to the public. This has been reported in the community forums, I myself have seen their banners and signs up at the shows, where they have banners saying oh we've been doing mining for years and it's all great. Really kind of quite disingenuous information. But I'm not here to attack mining companies, I'm here to say that I feel like there needs to be an equal balance in how we talk about these things. I feel like I'm in a debate, on five minutes.



Rachel Tumminello: I just ... The last thing and I think it's not really probably possible, and I did, I kind of realised when I was re-reviewing the report, is that there are things that are really interconnected across chapters, and that does make it really difficult to follow. I really appreciate the effort you have put into doing that. My only concern is, is there a remit within your terms of reference, because the way I read and interpret them, there is, but maybe there isn't, and you've got enough other stuff to do. Is the cross link between the recent impacts between the environmental and social factors. When you have ... You talk about risk too, water contamination and things like that, but what is the risks of those in terms of its flow on impacts into the social areas, like the Katherine example of the PFAS Contamination where they don't can't drink their local water. If you had small communities in remote areas, what are the flow on impacts of the risk of that potentiality of these social impacts of people being dispossessed from their land? I know that you're not ... I know that you're aware of that, but it's just difficult sometimes when you're reading those other heavy sections on the water and the land and the worlds and the things like that, that it feels very removed from the actual reality of what those risks are for people living in those places. Thank you very much for your time.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Thank you, I must say, we don't often get people who come and talk to us specifically about social impacts, so we're always grateful when someone such as yourself does and we will certainly, I will certainly re-read what we've said in chapter 12 in light of some of the constructive comments and criticisms you've made, absolutely.

Rachel Tumminello: Great, thank you. I realise that you've said that there isn't enough research, and I'm going to go read the two references you've got there. I was really disturbed when I read one of the papers, that was a very thorough social assessment of the ... I have no idea how to say it. The Marcellus Shale.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Marcellus, yeah.

Rachel Tumminello: Yeah. That one obviously has had the most research on it in any kind of fracking stuff. I found a very disturbing paper that did a lot of review with the people, and they said it was akin to an extreme trauma, what those communities went through. Trauma is a severe word, we don't use that lightly, psychologists do not use that word lightly. Trauma is child abuse, trauma is being raped, trauma is coming home from war. This is not light stuff, so I realise that it's maybe not a dearth of evidence, the opposite of dearth, the large amount of evidence, but I think that we need to acknowledge that the preliminary evidence is concerning.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Well certainly if you are ... If you come across in light of your expertise any additional information, articles, whatever, please do send them to us as soon as possible. We would very grateful to receive them. Without a doubt.

Rachel Tumminello: Thank you.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Thank you. Any questions? Right, again, thank you very much for your presentation today.