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2.1 Panel meetings

Since the Inquiry was constituted on 3 December 2016, the Panel has formally met on nine occasions (see Appendix 4).

2.2 Interstate visits and stakeholder meetings

On 31 January 2017, the Panel undertook an interstate visit to South Australia (**SA**) to consult with officers of the Energy Resources Division of the Department of State Development concerning the regulatory framework governing conventional and unconventional onshore gas development in that State. Consultation also occurred with the Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission Consultation and Response Agency to discuss models of community engagement.

On 1 and 2 February 2017, the Panel travelled to Moomba in SA to conduct a two day site visit of Santos Ltd's (**Santos**) operations in the Cooper Basin.

The purpose of the visit was to observe drilling and hydraulic fracturing activities associated with deep gas (shale and tight gas) extraction, rather than CSG extraction.

The type of gas extraction witnessed at Santos' operation in the Cooper Basin was tight gas, not shale gas, however, the infrastructure, processes and supporting operations are relevantly comparable to those of a typical onshore shale gas operation.

The field trip was an important activity to undertake during the early stages of the Inquiry in order to better understand the size and scale of the hydraulic fracturing process for deep gas extraction and its impact on the local environment.

During the two day visit, the Inquiry witnessed the hydraulic fracturing of a fracture stage at the Allunga 2 and 3 well pads, as well as the equipment and processes associated with the hydraulic fracturing. At the site, the Panel observed a demonstration of the composition and mixing of hydraulic fracturing fluid used at that location. The Panel also visited a producing gas well at the adjacent Allunga 1 well pad.

At the Caraka 2 well site, the Panel witnessed the drilling of a well for the purpose of hydraulic fracturing, and the associated infrastructure and equipment. The Panel had a tour of the drilling rig floor and the storage area used for surface and production casing.

While on-site board and lodgings (one night) and ground transportation were provided by Santos, the remaining costs associated with the trip were paid for by the Inquiry.

On 18 and 19 July 2017, the Panel went to Canberra, ACT, to meet with a range of Commonwealth stakeholders, including the Department of the Environment and Energy. They discussed environmental exposure conceptualisation and the environmental risks of chemicals used in CSG extraction and funding announced in the May 2017 budget for combined geological and bioregional resource assessments. They also discussed Australia's current emissions reductions targets, whether or not a supply of natural gas to the east coast of Australia could assist in meeting these targets, and the role of the Northern Gas Pipeline.

On 24-28 July 2017, the Inquiry travelled to Queensland to meet with stakeholders directly affected by CSG exploration and extraction, consult with government regulators and visit a CSG field operated by Santos.

During an evidence gathering tour of the Darling Downs and south west region of Queensland, the Panel met with landowners, local government and businesses in Dalby, Roma and Miles that were directly involved with or affected by CSG development. The Panel spoke with people who had been adversely affected by CSG development, especially landowners whose interactions with unconventional gas operators had been unfavourable, including Ms Helen Bender and Mr John Jenkyn. Some of the people the Panel spoke to complained of the deleterious health effects of living in close proximity to CSG development. With others, the detrimental social impacts of a rapid escalation in CSG activity were discussed (see Chapter 12).

Conversely, the Panel met with farmers who had had the beneficial use of processed produced CSG water for irrigation and cattle grazing use, which had resulted in increased productivity and income. The Panel also visited the Miles State High School Trade Centre, which in partnership with Origin Energy Limited (**Origin**) provides vocational education and employment pathways for its students. Similarly, the Panel heard from local business people and local government officials who gave examples of infrastructure improvements, such as new or improved roads, paid for by various gas companies.



Inquiry Chair Justice Rachel Pepper and Prof Barry Hart AM with students from the Miles State High School Trade Centre.

While in Queensland, the Panel travelled to Brisbane to meet with a range of regulatory agencies and government departments. The Panel learnt about the resulting governance structures and industry standards that have evolved to meet public expectation and afford improved levels of social licence. Meetings were facilitated with various stakeholders such as AgForce, the Queensland Farmers Federation, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (**CSIRO**), the Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance (**GISERA**), the University of Queensland's Centre for Coal Seam Gas (**CCSG**), the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, and the Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment (**OGIA**). The consistent theme of these talks and presentations was the need to ensure that an appropriately robust regulatory framework was in place before the development of any unconventional gas resource, a matter that many of the regulators conceded had not been attended to in Queensland prior to the large number of CSG activities occurring in that State, thereby leading to many of the adverse social impacts experienced in that jurisdiction.

The Panel also toured a Santos operated CSG field in Roma, where the Panel saw various multi-pad well sites and the disturbance footprint of those sites, and inspected a cattle grazing operation co-existing with a CSG development. On the same visit, the Panel visited Santos' Roma gas processing hub and Unburri, the Roma field workers' camp.

Finally, on 7 September 2017, the Chair and Dr Vaughan Beck AM travelled to SA, to further consult with the Department of State Development to discuss in greater detail the governance of unconventional gas in that State and its potential application to the NT.

2.3 Northern Territory stakeholder meetings

Between 20 and 24 February 2017, the Chair and the Deputy Chair, Prof Barry Hart AM, met with stakeholders at various locations in the Territory to discuss the work of the Inquiry and to seek their input into the first round of community consultations.

On 4 July 2017, the Chair and Dr Alan Andersen travelled to Newcastle Waters to meet with the traditional owners of that area and, then to Elliott, to meet with a number of community members. Representatives from the Northern Land Council attended the meeting at Newcastle Waters. At both meetings, a range of issues were discussed, including the need to be properly and fully informed and consulted in respect of all potential onshore shale gas activities on Aboriginal and native title land (that is, the need to be told of both the benefits and the potential adverse consequences of this development), the need for the Northern Land Council to act in a wholly disinterested manner in conducting negotiations with gas companies on behalf of Aboriginal people, the concern of Aboriginal people regarding the capacity for environmental and cultural damage to occur as a result of any onshore shale gas industry (especially with respect to water, traditional cultural practices, bush tucker and sacred sites), and the need to ensure that the benefits of any onshore unconventional gas development flowed to the communities upon whose land the development would take place, in particular, the need to create and retain local employment opportunities.

On 5 and 6 July 2017, the Chair, accompanied by Dr Andersen, visited two Northern Territory pastoral stations, namely, Hayfield Station operated by the Dyer family, and Maryfield Station operated by North Star Pastoral Pty Ltd. The purpose of this visit was to better understand firsthand the operation of a cattle station in order to assist in evaluating the potential impacts, both adverse (for example, disruption to business) and beneficial (improvements in infrastructure and the creation of an ongoing revenue stream), that any onshore shale gas development might have on that industry.

A full list of stakeholder meetings is at Appendix 5.

2.4 Departmental briefings

As referred to above in Section 2.2, various government departments, both within the NT and from other jurisdictions, have briefed the Panel on subjects relevant to the work of the Inquiry. The purpose of these briefings was to provide essential background information on a range of topics. A list of all briefings is set out at Appendix 6.

In this regard, the Panel consulted with the Alberta Energy Regulator (**AER**). The purpose of this engagement was to better ascertain the regulatory framework within which the onshore unconventional gas industry operates in that Province, and moreover, to determine whether there are governance measures from that jurisdiction that can be appropriately adapted and applied in the Northern Territory. The consultation resulted in the AER making a formal submission to the Inquiry (submission 483).

2.5 Consultation

The Inquiry was given a mandate to consult widely with Territorians about their views on the development of an onshore unconventional shale gas industry in the Northern Territory.

The first round of consultation took place in March 2017, following the release of the Issues Paper. It consisted of public hearings and community information and engagement sessions, or 'community forums'.

Following the release of the *Interim Report* in July 2017 (**Interim Report**), a second round of consultation during August 2017 was undertaken in the same format as the first round.

A summary of the discussions that occurred during the first and second round of consultations is contained in Chapter 3.

2.5.1 Public hearings

Two rounds of public hearings have been conducted in 2017. The hearings were open to anyone who had registered in advance. So far, the Inquiry has held 105 public hearings in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Darwin. Presenters included members of the public, environmental

groups, the gas industry, pastoralists, Aboriginal land managers, Land Councils and local governments. A full list of those who attended the hearings is found at Appendix 7.

The hearings were recorded and live-streamed on the Inquiry's website to facilitate access for those who could not otherwise attend in person. During March and August, the live-stream was viewed by almost 2,000 people, including those in Canada, US, Ireland, UK, Hungary, Spain and Switzerland. The video recordings are available to be viewed on the Inquiry's Submission Library website page at www.frackinginquiry.nt.gov.au/submission-library.

The video recordings and transcripts of each hearing, as well as any documentation provided by the presenters (which have been tabled as submissions to the Inquiry), are available to view on the Inquiry's Submission Library website page listed under the name of the organisation or person who presented at www.frackinginquiry.nt.gov.au/submission-library.

The hearings were open to the public and the media. Media were allowed to separately record the hearings.

2.5.2 Community forums

Consultation during the Inquiry has also included community information and engagement sessions, or 'forums'. These forums were designed to encourage active discussion and participation by those who attended and were open to the public. Prior registration was not a prerequisite to attendance. A full list of community forums is contained in Appendix 8.

Media were allowed to attend, but were not permitted to audio record the forums, in order to facilitate open discussion.

The first round of community forums commenced with a brief presentation from either Emeritus Prof Peter Flood or Dr Ross Smith to explain the process by which unconventional shale gas is extracted. The attendees then broke into smaller roundtable groups, each with an allocated Panel member, to discuss the issues raised by the presentation, identified in the Issues Paper, and any other concerns or comments that the community wanted to raise. At the conclusion of the group discussions, each Panel member presented a summary of their group discussion to the entire forum.

The second round of community forums featured a presentation by the Panel of the Inquiry's work to date, the content of the Interim Report, and a description of future work of the Inquiry. Roundtable discussion occurred following the presentations.

The roundtable format has been designed and utilised to encourage broad participation from the community by enabling a greater number of people to speak in a smaller setting. The roundtable format has been well received by attendees in all communities.



An Inquiry community forum held in Elliott, July 2017.

2.6 Presentations by the Panel

Members of the Panel have been invited to present a summary of the work of the Inquiry to date to the organisations listed in Appendix 9.

2.7 Community updates

In order to keep Territorians regularly informed of the work of the Inquiry, the Inquiry has released 25 community updates. A list including a brief description of these updates is appended to this Report at Appendix 10.

2.8 Media engagements

As a matter of transparency, it is important that the media has access to the Inquiry. In this regard, to date the Chair has participated in 30 media engagements. These have included television and radio interviews (both live and pre-recorded), articles, and letters to newspapers. A list of the Chair's media engagements to date is located at Appendix 11.