



Darwin - Andrea Finn

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Speaker: Andrea Finn

Andrea Finn: Good morning everybody, my name's Andrea Finn, appearing on my own behalf. I just want to thank the Inquiry for allowing me to voice my concerns. My concerns are regulation. Who specifically is going to be doing the regulation? Is this going to be government? Is it going to be self regulated? Or is it going to be a totally independent group that's actually going to go out and actually do the checks on these wells? Who's going to check for spills and how often are they going to be checked? Is this going to be random, or is this going to be, "We will be here on this particular day" so if there is a problem, cover-ups. And I'm sorry, but my experience so far in life is that yeah, if there's going to be something dodgy, somebody will do it.

The reason why I thought this is because one of the examples is in New South Wales, one of the companies had created a number of spills and the only reason why anyone found out was because a whistleblower actually from the company actually said something. That was the only reason why it was found out. And it does concern me.

Okay, how are spills going to be handled? How are the storage going to be? Is it going to be in ponds? Ponds are lined with plastic. Plastic tears. Every single one has some form of leakage. The chemicals that we're talking about are lethal in large doses. Even in small doses over a period of time. We also have things like rainfall. In the last few weeks, we've had a monsoon. On my block alone at Humpty Doo we had over 900 mls of rain. That is a lot of water. How are we going to stop that water going into ponds? How are we going to stop it overflowing and spilling? Because once it's out there, it's gone. How are you ever going to be able to trace it and actually be able to fix it?

Also, things like methane leakage. Why are people not allowed near these wells? People have testing equipment, private people, but we're not allowed near the wells. We're threatened with all sorts of dire consequences if you go anywhere near it. Why's it fenced off? Why don't they want us there? What are we hiding? If it's all open and transparent, why do we need to hide this stuff?

Even around Alice Springs, Alice Springs has been known to flood. You can get some very heavy rainfalls down there in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek and places like that. The companies, a lot of these companies hide under



offshore and they hide behind shell companies. Who's going to pay for the damage? How are we actually going to actually get the money? Examples are places like Mt Todd mine down near Katherine. It has ponds full of heavy metal. It's been abandoned. Basically, we're the ones ... What they're doing is they're releasing some of the water into the waterways. Heavy metal builds up into the base. Fish feed off that, eventually the chain ... Another one is McArthur River Mine. These are all places that have done environmental spills, and everyone's like "No it's okay, don't worry about it, [inaudible]." No, how about we just stop destroying things because it only gets worse?

Another one is things like the ads on TVs. It gives you the good points, it doesn't tell you the whole lot. There's a guy called Greg, he declines to give his surname. He says he's the owner of Tarlee Station. He states he's an environmentalist and he has no fear of fracking. He says he wouldn't put his family at risk and he would never harm the environment. He has no fear of contamination. What he fails to tell everybody is his property is up for sale. Why? If it's so great, why is his property up for sale? Why doesn't he tell anyone that his property is up for sale? All you have to do is Google it, go onto Domain. Type in 'Tarlee Station.'

And to anyone that thinks hydraulic fracturing is a good thing, at this present time I'm personally affected by aquifer contamination. I own 35 acres in Katherine. I purchased this land as a retirement block. My problem is the Tindall aquifer's contaminated with PFAS. My land is now considered worthless. I have at my own expense purchased three 25,000 litre rainwater tanks to collect rainwater so I can rent my property and as a duty of care to my tenant. I'm now told that PFAS is in the dust and any dust on my roof is now in my rainwater tanks, so I now have the cost of having to test my water. Not just my bore but now my rainwater tanks as well. Who pays for this? I'm paying for it. \$280 every time I want to get my water tested, and I have to do this every three months to try and make sure that I've got some form of duty of care so I can actually rent my place out. Well at present, I have no tenant. Nobody's interested in living in a contaminated environment.

I do have the right to pay my mortgage and I do have the right to pay my rates. It's supposed to be an open and transparent system from the Government and the Department of Health. And the only way I can get information is through the Department of Health in New South Wales and Queensland. Those are the ones that are telling us don't eat eggs, don't drink milk, don't eat the meat on your block. The drinking of the water, limit eating of the fruit and vegetables that you grow on your own block. I'm getting that from interstate, not from here. So, the open and transparent thing, that's why I'm worried that cover ups and stuff like that, because so far we're not being told the full truth. We have to go looking for the information ourselves.

They said that shellfish was fine, now they've backtracked on that and they've said "Oh, well just eat it limited," now they're saying don't eat it at all. The whole of the Katherine area is completely, it's just a no man's land.



My land is worthless. Anyone want to buy 35 acres in Katherine? If they can't tell us the truth about PFAS then why would they tell us the truth about the chemicals in fracking and what's really going on? Do I trust our government? No I don't. They promised a [inaudible] at the last election on the behaviour of the previous government. Now they tell us that they won't do it because it's not in the best interest of Territorians. Again, what are they hiding? What don't they want us to know? I think most people have a pretty good idea of what's going on.

Knowing these things, how can we risk fracking? I fear for the future and I fear what we're leaving our children and our children's children. I fear for the ones who can't live without water. There's also the emotional and financial cost to the people that are directly affected, and it won't be the companies. It's the little people, it's the people like me, it's the people of Katherine. The people now sitting there going, "Well what do we do? Our livelihood is gone but we've been told that there's nothing going to be done because they can't prove things." Well, you read up on PFAS in Europe. It's linked to cancers, it's linked to birth defects, it's linked to so many different problems. Yet nobody wants to actually do a proper study to prove it, but anyone who lives in and around the area where PFAS was produced or used all suffer higher rates of unusual cancers. Clusters.

And this is in a town where you can monitor. What are you going to do out in areas where you can't monitor? Who's going to be out there checking? Who's going to be out there protecting the environment, protecting people, protecting our future? Because that's what it comes down to. For the handful of jobs, I don't think it's worth it. And that's pretty much all I've got to say, thank you.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Thank you very much for that presentation. I just had a couple of questions. Sorry, I'm not in any way arguing with you, but have you had an official evaluation on the land? Has someone-

Andrea Finn: I tried to sell it. It was on the market for 15 months.

Hon. Justice Pepper: No buyers, okay.

Andrea Finn: I've had a lot of people tell me that, "Oh no, PFAS is okay," and I said, "Okay if it's fine you buy the block." "Oh no, I don't want it." And I've had some people say, "Oh yeah, I'll give you 10 cents on the dollar, that's \$30,000." I still have a mortgage. That's not going to cover even part of my mortgage.

Hon. Justice Pepper: I understand, and you also made reference to ads on the television. Most of the panel are not from here. What ad were you referring to? I'm interested to know about that.

Andrea Finn: Okay, it's a guy, he's in his farm gear and-

Hon. Justice Pepper: It's a recent ad?

Andrea Finn: Yeah, it's on TV.



Hon. Justice Pepper: It's on now?

Andrea Finn: Yeah.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Okay, thank you.

Andrea Finn: And he says "My name is Greg," but he doesn't say his surname. "I own Tarlee Station and we have a fracking well on there," and blah blah blah, and "I'm an environmentalist and I'd never do anything to damage the environment and I have no fear of fracking and I wouldn't put my family at risk." But he doesn't tell everyone he's got the property up for sale. Why has he got it up for sale? Is it because it's got fracking on it? Is it because he sees what the future is?

Hon. Justice Pepper: Is this ad, does it say at the end of the ad that it's sponsored by somebody?

Andrea Finn: Yeah, but unfortunately it flashes up so quickly that you can't actually read it.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Okay.

Andrea Finn: We've tried sitting there with a mobile phone and tried to video it but we've never actually been quick enough to be able to get it.

Board Members: It's APPEA.

Hon. Justice Pepper: It's APPEA, I'm told it's APPEA. Okay, well we will check that ad down. Thank you. Any questions? ... All right, thank you very much for taking the time today and coming and speaking with us. It's important. Thank you.

Andrea Finn: Thank you very much.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Thank you.