



10th April 2017

Hon. Justice Pepper
Chair Hydraulic Fracturing Inquiry
GPO Box 4396,
Darwin, NT 0801

Dear Justice Pepper,

Submission to Hydraulic Fracturing Inquiry

The Central Desert Regional Council is a large regional council that covers approximately 280,000 km² in the central part of the Northern Territory. Our Council boundary includes a large area of Aboriginal Land Trust land as well as a number of large pastoral leases.

The Council boundary incorporates a number of known or potential shale deposits including the Arthur Creek Formation, the Ngalia Basin and the Lander Trough.

The Council comprises twelve representatives from across the region. Ten of the twelve councillors are Indigenous leaders, the Council also has a local business owner and a pastoralist represented.

The Council met on the 30th March 2017 and discussed the Background and Issues Paper at some length. The Council has asked me to provide the following list of concerns relating to hydraulic fracking in their region.

Water

- Concern over the impact of fracking on the quality of water available within the region. This concern had two parts:
 - Protection of water table from possible contamination
 - Impact of contaminated ground water on wildlife
- Fracking requires the use of water and potable water is extremely limited within the Central Desert region. The Council questioned whether the water requirements of fracking will impact on water availability (i.e. deplete water tables)?

Land

- Concern over the fragmentation of natural habitat through the creation of access roads into undeveloped areas.

Air

- Pollution caused by leakages and omissions from active and legacy wells.
- Dust pollution caused by increase traffic.

Public Health

- None were discussed.

Impacts on Aboriginal people and their culture;

- Inadequate controls to prevent access and desecration of sacred spaces.

Social Impacts

- Inequitable distribution of royal payments resulting in tensions within community.
- Difficulty in engaging with exploration and mining companies and the lack of long term local indigenous employment.

Economic Impacts

- Council recognized that there is the potential for employment for local communities particularly around exploration and support services. Council also noted that historically the actual job creation has been far less than indicated and that these jobs are low skilled and transient.

Land Access

- There was a lengthy discussion regarding the ability of pastoral lease holders to restrict access to their land and the rights of the pastoral lease holder to restrict wells being dug in areas that may impact on their ability to operate their business (for example near bores).
- Protection of organic certification of current beef production.

Regulatory Framework

- Concerns over the ability of the NTG to monitor and control commercial activity within the region (given past issues).
- The strength of the environmental protection legislation.
- The management of and responsibility for clean up associated with decommissioned wells (once again, this reflects experience of previous environmental issues associated with a decommissioned mine)

Other issues

- Impact on existing local road infrastructure and the inability for the Council to seek payment from industries that use the road (in other states the legislation allows the application of "heavy haulage" fees which provide an additional income stream for the Council to repair roads "consumed" by heavy vehicle use.)

The Council was clearly concerned with the concept of hydraulic fracturing and would be seeking strong assurances before supporting such a proposal. It should also be noted that many of the councillors are also Traditional Owners and felt that they had already made their views known through the Central Land Council submission.

Yours sincerely,



Cathryn Hutton
Chief Executive Officer