

## fracking inquiry

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**From:** Jan Hintze [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, 11 February 2018 5:21 PM  
**To:** fracking inquiry  
**Subject:** Presentation to the Scientific Inquiry  
**Attachments:** Presentation to SIUF.pdf

I attach a copy of my presentation given to the Inquiry on Tuesday, February 6th. I have edited it somewhat from the rough notes I spoke from in the presentation, but hopefully it is more coherent.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak, and I apologise for being a couple of days late with forwarding this document. Life is always busier than you think it will be.,

cheers

Jan Hintze.

My name is Jan Hintze, and although I don't represent any organisation, I have been involved with the horticultural industry in the Darwin rural area, growing many different crops, since 1979.

My bonafides as presenter to this Inquiry is based on -

\*almost forty years farming Darwin rural area

\*more than 20 years member of NT Horticultural Association, most of which as member of Council, and its last five years as President.

\*20 years as leader of the Cut Flower group within NTHA.

\*2006 NT Rural Woman of the year Award

\*Member of Howard Springs Water Allocation Committee.

I shall not go into the many clear justifications for banning fracking altogether, but the following list covers most of them.

Despoiling of the environment leading to destroy the tourism industry

Aboriginal rights/necessities

Water pollution

Damage by access roads to the many sites anticipated for the supply of materials, drilling rigs, chemicals, etc.

Probably pollution from stores of chemicals, fuels, human habitation.

Disruption of wildlife by roads and fences

Disruption of pastoral industry by the roads and fences, as well as intrusions of strangers on the properties

Extraction of water in vast quantities from unassessed aquifers

Stability of geological structures which vary considerably throughout the Territory.

What I do wish to address is the reliability of the scientific evidence supporting fracking since it is provided largely by sources which have a vested interest in the outcome of this Inquiry. I take the point that much scientific evidence is available to support both sides of the discussion, but little of that is available in form which is comprehensible to a member of the general public.

As a historian I was trained to assess the value of evidence by taking into account who has provided it. There is a truism that the winners write history books.

This needs to be applied to those who are providing the evidence, on both sides of this argument. Those supporting it stand to gain immediate commercial benefit, and those against are concerned by a permanent loss to the entire Territory, Australian, and World community. To me, and others like me, this tends to put believability on the side of those against. Another truism, 'When in doubt, don't.'

Newspapers, magazines, television and social networks tend to be the major sources of information for most people, and even some of this is lacking for people who live in the more remote rural areas which will be most affected by the problem. And indeed the reports in the media tend to suggest that the companies engaged in this industry sometimes minimise, or outright deny accidental damage, or write it off as collateral damage. Misleading by omission or false promises tends to lead to disbelief of any information. In these circumstances, is it any wonder that the statements made by companies and politicians are treated with disbelief.

Promises by interested companies that all will be well, that the science is infallible, the engineering sure and reliable, the profits enormous there will be jobs for all have been made by supporters.

Past evidence has shown that reassurances by mining operators is not that reliable, particularly when you consider the number of toxic, derelict mines scattered throughout the Territory, and Australia. The mounting evidence, worldwide, of the damage to the environment, the pollution, the earth tremors, has led to a large number of countries and states within countries banning the fracking operations, and why would the Territory suffer less than they. Perhaps because we have a small population in a large area, it might be considered that these horrendous results would go unnoticed, or that since the country is sparsely inhabited, it doesn't matter. I think the Antifracking Movement disproves this attitude.

It would appear that the amount of gas extracted from one of these operations is a very small percentage of gas production from traditional methods, and the reason for the demand for this gas has been that contracts for export of all the gas currently produced have been entered into, leaving a shortage of gas in parts of Australia. Not in the NT, however, since provision was made for our supply before exporting. Therefore it would seem appropriate that we should consider this as a Territory matter, and not succumb to the pressure of supply problems in other areas, where these same battles are being fought.

The promises of thousands of jobs would appear somewhat of an exaggeration, but even so, these jobs would generally be for a highly skilled workforce of drillers, engineers, heavy equipment operators, geologists and chemists, probably all of whom would come from outside the Territory and possibly from international consultant sources. The promise of jobs for Territorians would seem to be specious, in that the few unemployed, and we have a low unemployment rate, would not be qualified for these tasks. Any programme proposed to train local labour would surely take some years to achieve, and would be a major cost to the Territory.

The supervision of mining operations has in the past been extremely limited, largely due to lack of staff and funding, leading to the failure of rehabilitation.

There have been promises by political proponents that the work will be closely supervised to maintain standards (which appear to be set by the operating companies). The cost of this supervision of thousands of wells will be enormous, and borne by the taxpayer, and would be carried out by qualified engineers and geologists, and again, the availability of such staff would be fairly unlikely in the immediate future.

The provisions of the Mines Act for the rehabilitation of mine sites are fairly unenforceable if the company concerned has gone into receivership, as seems to often happen and reports lately about

abandoned wells deteriorating and leaking because of low or nil maintenance do not reassure.

The inherent risks of all of the above negative outcomes have been assessed as moderate, and controllable. However, I would like to have you consider whether ANY degree of risk to our long term water supply, to the environment which is one of our major tourism and recreational assets, to the pastoral industries and agricultural operations which already exist, is acceptable.

What must be always kept in mind is that, unlike most other areas of population in Australia, the Northern Territory is entirely dependant on the underground water supply. The rainfall in the Territory is extremely seasonal, and depends on the northwest Monsoon. At other times, there is little or no rain at all. Even the Darwin and Palmerston, our major population centres, get a significant percentage their water from underground sources.

If things go wrong with these highly technical and dangerous operations, as they invariable will, the damage done will be irrevocable. You cannot decontaminate an underground aquifer, as DOD discovered in Katherine, you cannot purify the toxic chemical-polluted water which is emitted from the borehole along with the gas. You cannot guarantee the dams holding this toxic mess will not be flooded during wet season rains neither in the near future, nor the indefinite. You cannot remove the damage done by the roads crisscrossing the pastoral country. The disruption to the movement of stock, the death of stock on roads. The lack of water availability for other uses due to the millions of litres taken up and rendered unusable by the fracking process. The indigenous occupants and owners of vast amounts of the land in question have significant and important needs for access to the land, and desecration of their country would do untold harm to them and to their culture.

It seems to me to have faith in advice put forward by people and organisations who have a vested interest in the outcomes of this

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inquiry, is a foolhardy exercise. The risks are high, and the possible damage is irrevocable.

I recall the old joke about the man who jumped off the Empire State Bldg, and when asked at the twentieth floor, how it is going, he said - so far so good.

We should contemplate what happens at the end of that tale.