



**NEWCASTLE WATERS  
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# Newcastle Waters Station and Indigenous outstation cut off by floodwaters

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“The Beetaloo sub-Basin is used in Interim report as case study for preliminary analysis of water resources and water use because it is the most prospective area in NT for shale gas development, and is the region where the best information is available.” (Interim Report)

We disagree, many knowledge gaps in water and land studies.

“The Panels preliminary assessment is that the impact of onshore shale gas operations on surface water supply in semi arid (such as Beetaloo sub-Basin) and arid areas of the NT is relatively low.”

“There are no permanent surface water resources (rivers, streams, lakes and waterholes) in the Beetaloo sub-Basin.” (Interim Report, p7)

Interim report does not acknowledge the risks to the catchment for our permanent and semi-permanent water sources. Some systems such as Lake Woods, Longreach Waterhole are waterways of international conservational significance and important cultural heritage.

There are currently no rules to stop companies operating in the Wet season. We know flooding of pits has already occurred on pastoral leases.

Limmen Bight fills up October Creek straight through amungee, then to beetaloo, fills up all the little waterholes then in Newcastle creek to marlinja and long

## **Risks to our culture from poisoned water from fracking**

Our songlines are carried through the underground and surface waterways.

Our songlines are ngurramarla which means it carries the spirits of our old people to be passed on through the generations. This is a cycle that keeps alive.

“Beetaloo got quidjiga (song line) that flows through. At the end of the song they put them down in the water. We have to maintain the health of the waterways. That water is alive through the song line. If that water isn’t there the songlines will die too. If that fracking happens and brings poison it will make it worse.” Raymond Dixon.

When wet season comes we are worried that those pits will overflow. We don’t think the companies can be trusted. We think they will try and cut corners in remote areas and dispose of water in our waterways, and waste products on the land.

Marlinja in flood is like being in the middle of the ocean – flooding usually lasts about 4 months, finishing in may – starting in October or November but it is unpredictable. The Interim Report says the Panel is considering stopping companies from fracking in Wet season, but this is unpredictable and we do not trust the companies will comply with these directions. The water in the Beetaloo region travels right through that country. If damage is done it is not a problem that can be contained; all communities in the flood path will suffer.

We are also worried about the poison leaching into the soils from unlined pits. There are no legal requirements for lined pits currently, and the pits on some cattle stations like Hayfield are not lined. Heavy metals, radioactive

## Importance of Newcastle Creek, Lake Wood and Longreach Waterhole

- Lake Woods is an important breeding site and migration stopover for many birds, and when flooded can support more than 100,000 waterbirds.
- We share skin names with all the birds in this area that give us our place in country through those relationships
- The Magpie Goose is very important culturally and uses this area as a critical breeding ground.
- Marlinja holds the dreaming story for the Jabiru

# Bush Medicine

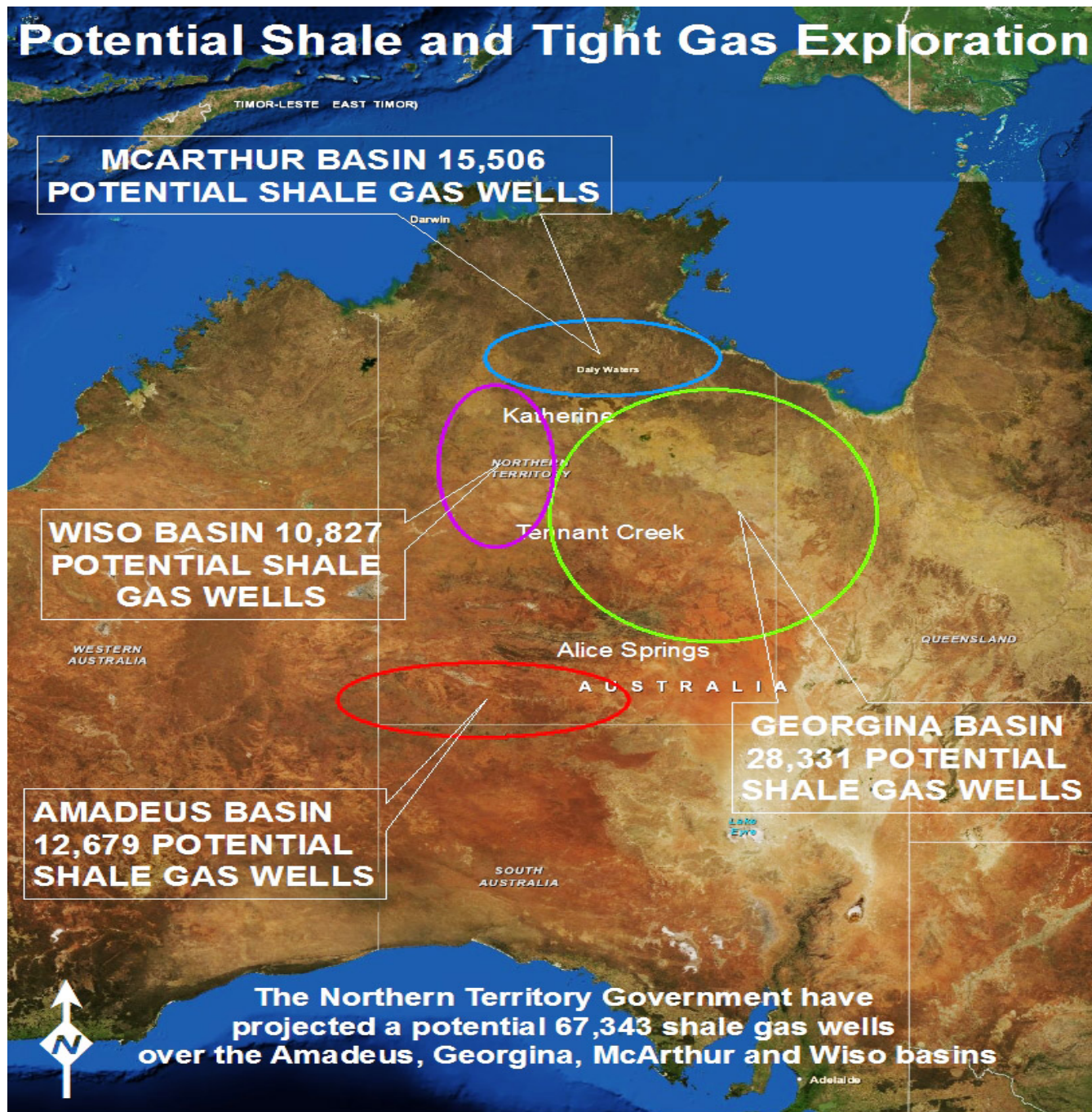
- This area is home to a lot of bush medicines that our old people used for healing and today we still use these plants for the same reasons.
- Some of these plants can only survive on black soil.
- For example Kurrubimimi is one of the main bush medicines we use to help heal stress, bones, muscles, and internal organs.



# Chapter 11 – Aboriginal People and their Culture

- *'... Aboriginal people make up most of the resident populations in the areas of the shale gas basins in the Northern Territory ... Aboriginal people must be able to maintain their cultural traditions relating to the land in order that their ownership rights continue to be recognised from one generation to the next. ... Panel assessment that Aboriginal people have not yet been given enough information about the potential risks and benefits of hydraulic fracturing ...'*

# Potential Shale and Tight Gas Exploration



The Northern Territory Government have projected a potential 67,343 shale gas wells across four main gas basins – the Amadeus, Georgina (Beetaloo), McArthur and Wiso Basins.

A majority of these potential gasfields would risk land, water and culture in these regions.

(Reference: Australian Council of Learned Academies, 2014)

During the social impact assessment currently underway our region is being asked to give their views on a development scenario in the Beetaloo sub-Basin, using a model provided by the gas companies Pangea, Origin and Santos that suggests over a 25 year period a total of approximately 1200 wells and 150 well pads could be developed.



- 2 The estimates provided by Origin, Pangea and Santos suggest that the combined developments over the next 25 years could result in between 1,000 and 1,200 wells associated with around 150 pads.

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Yet, Coffey consultants are telling people during social impact assessment that:

“

## Summary and recommendations

All Petroleum Exploration permits on Aboriginal land, Native Title or ALRA, should be reviewed if landowners are contesting them. At the moment we are being blocked by the NT Government, the Land Councils and the gas companies when we try to find out what agreements have been made on our own land. It is an expensive and difficult process for our people to navigate and understand and we are being told that agreements are 'Commercial in Confidence' even when we are the recognised landowners for an affected region.

During consultation meetings the Land Councils are not showing our people what fracking gasfields look like in a production stage. They are only showing the early exploration stage so many of our people think fracking involves just a few gas wells. If our people agree to the proposal based on this limited information they can then not get out of the agreement down the track if a large amount of gas is found and production starts.

The Land Councils and companies do not use interpreters at any of these meetings to explain complex mining techniques like fracking and all the processing plants, waste water ponds and other infrastructure that would be needed for a full-scale gasfield. This makes it very hard for our people to understand the full picture of what is being proposed and all the risks to country.

Fracking gasfields will affect the land and water of many neighbouring groups, not just individual landholders or families. It should not be a decision for any one landowner to make to put people and country at risk. We don't want the money being promised, we want our land the way it is. Its for our future generations. Our land and people are not for sale.