

fracking inquiry

From: Kathy Bannister <campaigns@good.do>
Sent: Wednesday, 7 February 2018 2:38 PM
To: fracking inquiry
Cc: chief.minister at nt.gov.au; minister.fyles at nt.gov.au; minister.vowles at nt.gov.au; minister.moss at nt.gov.au
Subject: Written submission on the NT Fracking Inquiry draft Final Report

Dear Justice Pepper and Panel,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written feedback on the draft Final Report of the NT Fracking Inquiry.

I see that the Panel's report makes many important recommendations in the face of the risks identified. I see that 115 risks have been identified and it's good that this has been seen.

I see that the Panel has made 19 recommendations relating to the NT's water resources and that you acknowledges that risks remain, even with these recommendations.

As you know groundwater is critical to life and industry in the Northern Territory. In addition it is also central to the spiritual beliefs of the oldest living cultures on the planet who uncannily have known of contamination risks without science. E.g. in the Coronation Hill area and 'sickness country' in Southern Kakadu and Nitmiluk National Parks.

Ground water is allocated for our residential needs, many existing industries and environmental flows. Many high yielding aquifers within the NT are close to their full allocation already. Many are under pressure from resource development (page 105) and we've already seen 'accidental' contamination of a vital aquifer near Katherine.

The draft Final Report outlines significant knowledge gaps for groundwater, biodiversity, landscape and health impacts. These gaps need to be rectified and baseline studies completed.

I think it is vitally important that no drilling areas be legislated and in place before exploration fracking should be considered. It's not acceptable to risk damaging water sources in outback and remote locations which are the source of life and industry in those areas. Once contaminated it is highly likely they can never be cleaned up and economic life in that area will never again be viable.

Many exploration activities are virtually identical to production activities and the risks of contamination are just as high. Chemical use, high pressure hydraulic fracturing through aquifers, water use and associated risks are involved. Any regulatory changes should apply to ALL stages of gas development.

The draft Final Report shows Origin energy identified exploration and appraisal could include 8-16 wells and 24-48 wells for delineation (page 167).

This means that Origin alone could drill and frack up to 64 wells across their tenement before critical improvements are made to the regulations.

With fracking companies combined, we could have a situation in the NT where there are over a hundred fracked gas wells across the landscape. That's all before production, without key law changes or baseline studies complete.

Critical studies identifying no go zones will be difficult if not impossible to achieve in an area already littered with fracked gas exploration wells. That's shutting the gate after the horse has bolted except the implications for life, the grazing industry and other uses of the land are far worse.

I support the recommendation of new regulations and legislation required to try and protect landholders and water. However, that work needs to happen BEFORE the oil and gas industry is permitted to start fracking in the Northern Territory again.

The critical recommendations below must be improved and work completed BEFORE EXPLORATION fracking takes place.

Recommendation 5.1 (Enforceable code of practice for abandonment of onshore gas wells)

Recommendation 5.6 (Wastewater management framework)

Recommendation 7.1 (Water Act amended for shale extraction licence and payment for water)

Recommendation 7.4 (Strategic regional environmental and baseline assessment (SREBA), including a regional groundwater model, be developed and undertaken)

Recommendation 8.4 (Fire management plan and 10 year baseline assessment)

Recommendation 9.2 (Code of practice be developed and implemented for monitoring, detection and reporting of methane emissions)

Recommendation 10.1 (Human Health Risk Assessment prepared and approved)

Recommendation 12.11 (Social impact management plan) This recommendation should also be extended to allow for the legal right to say 'no' to fracking if a grazier or landholder wants to ensure their asset is able to be inherited in tact by the next generation or sold on at the value it would have held prior to fracking taking place.

Recommendation 14.1 (Design and implement a full cost recovery system for fracking regulation)

Recommendation 14.16 (Legislation to regulate seismic surveys, drilling, hydraulic fracturing, and well abandonment)

Recommendation 14.18 (Fit and proper person test)

Recommendation 15.1 (Strategic regional environmental and baseline assessment (SREBA) undertaken and no go zones implemented)

In the NT there is a saying, "Once you frack you can't go back." Exploration fracking is no different. The studies, legal improvements and no-go zones suggested by the panel are critical. They must be actioned before any further fracking exploration.

I don't think it's acceptable to wait until the production phase to put in place critical new regulations and laws. We must avoid delays to the protection of the Northern Territory's water, landscapes and people.

Please considering this feedback.

Yours sincerely, Kathy Bannister Millner, Northern Territory, 0810, Australia

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