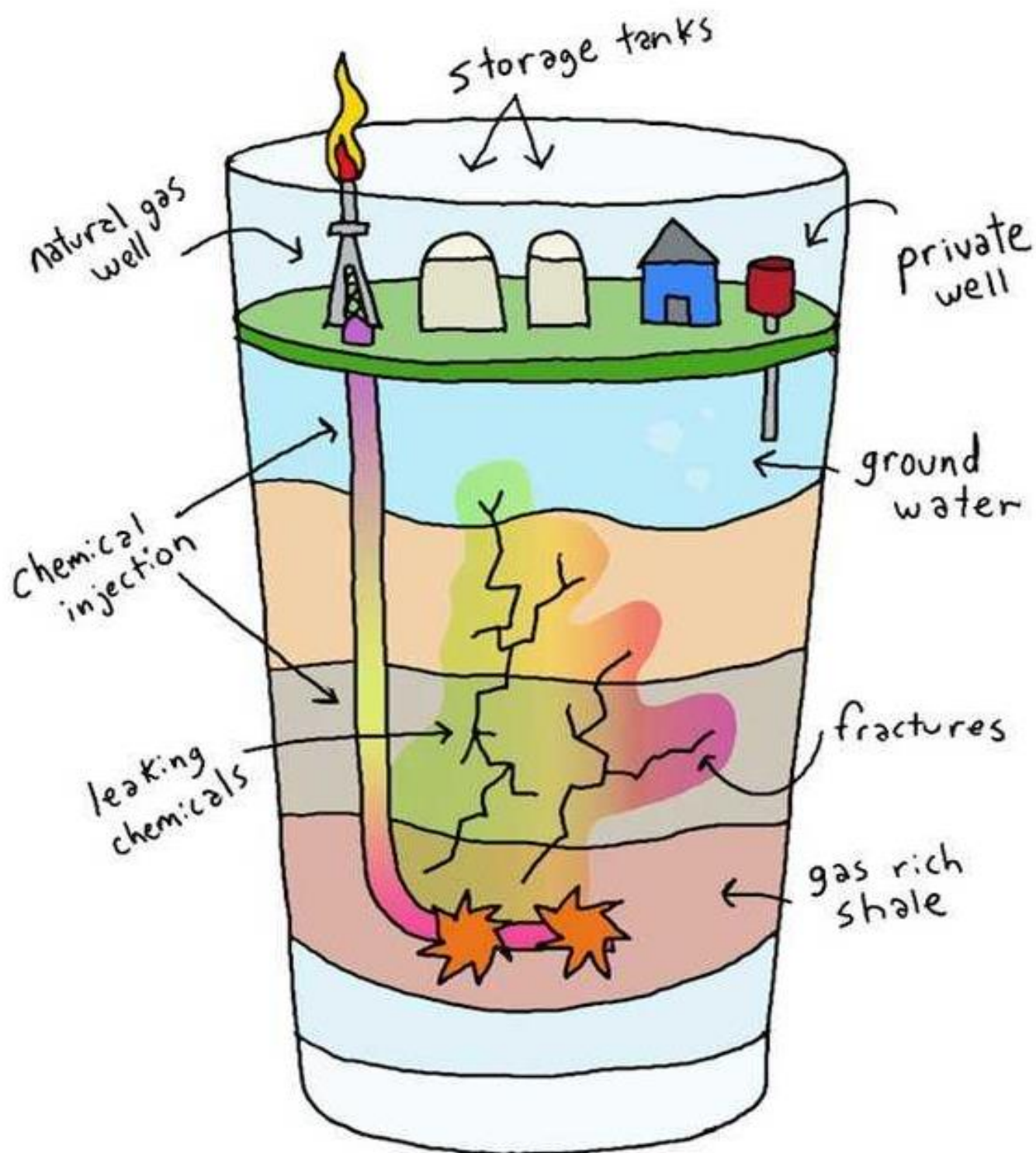


FRACKING



Good afternoon Justice Pepper and the Panel.

My name is Heidi Jennings, a concerned Territorian and I am opposed to Fracking.

I chose to speak up, as many people cannot, as they fear their jobs may be lost due to speaking out.

I wonder what we will leave the place like - for future generations to deal with the damage, corruption, greed and sadly, the possibility of no potable water.

I was born in Alice Springs, which relies heavily on groundwater. Water to the '*Red Centre*' has always been a welcoming sight. Aquifers supply water for general use, agriculture, industry, but more importantly is crucial to our surviving remnant vegetation and the ecosystems. There is the general understanding that Aquifers recharge; unfortunately once depleted, some may take thousands of years to naturally recharge due to their large capacity and intricate systems. These resources require management for long term sustainability; and we need to protect them.

The Territory has many beautiful rivers, billabongs, gorges and wetlands. We have countless beauties which rely heavily on freshwater systems; the National Parks: *Litchfield, Kakadu, Elsey* and *Nitmiluk*. As well as the waterways, the natural geological formations have huge cultural significance, not unlike our waterways. They are a key player in making the NT unique and a point of interest for domestic and international tourists.

We also experience huge tidal rivers and monsoonal rains that flood our wetlands, helping to soak the ground and kick-start a seasonal rivers' journey to flows for hundreds kilometres. Without these core water systems aquifers will be unable to give the NT its permanent waterways; the groundwater Aquifers in the *Beetaloo Gas Basin* flows north and discharges into the Katherine, Daly and Roper Rivers.

Aquifers and the hydrogeology of the Territory are still not fully understood; we know that all water is linked in quite complex ways - to ensure sustainable use, the issue require levels of scientific knowledge far beyond the general public's or general politicians' understanding, for this reason alone, there needs to be more study before action.

We have lived on our 20 acre property at Berry Springs for the past 25 years, although we are not farmers and instead enjoy having kept the natural bush, but we do rely on bore water. Our bore draws 1 litre-per-second, which is relatively small in comparison to some small agricultural bore systems in the top end. The bore water was originally documented on our bore report in 1993, coming from the *Burrell Creek Formation*. But this has changed, with new investigations that our bore water now comes from the *South Alligator rock formation*. This was discovered after new bores were drilled in the area, not far from our property. This is one example of water having the potential to possibly change over time, travel over large distances and brings light to our current misinterpretation of where our water really comes from. Therefore, if a waterway becomes contaminated in a certain place in the Territory, we put every waterway in the Territory at risk.

A moratorium was put on the Berry Springs Aquifer to ensure it is not overused. This was to maintain groundwater levels and water quality to meet the requirements for consumption and environmental use. This was also to ensure and support that Aboriginal culture, community and the environment are all protected as well as ensure economic development is sustainable.

I do get concerned with current new developments regarding water extraction, water use and land clearing. In 1997 a Mobile Base Station Tower was permitted to be erected over the Berry Springs Aquifer. I was very concerned for my children and the possibilities of poisoning them with contaminated water they drink and use, as were the concerns of the time.

I rang the World Health Organisation in Geneva; after extensive conversations I was advised to look for dead blue-green algae in the creek nearby, a key indicator of radiation levels. My concerns eventually turned into knowledge, but the safety of my children and community are more important than being in the dark.

After hearing the plight of an Australian Farmer, the late George Bender, fighting for the rights to protect water on his land from Fracking, made me more concerned about our water, air, land, all Australians and future generations.

A new property development of 18 5-acre blocks was proposed in close proximity to the Berry Springs Waterhole. I was concerned of the potential risk to the waterways and what the 'Cone Affect' could do to the Aquifer after 18 bores were installed and extracting water. This is a large concern with numerous other concerns that will affect our beautiful waterway; run off from residential water use, septic tanks and top soil wash-off.

At present in the Territory, we already have issues of water contamination in the NT. The *McArthur River Mine*, *Mt. Todd* and the *Katherine River PFAS* issues, just to name a few. These issues have not been rectified and seems it may take many years before a solution is found, if ever.

In Australia we already have the *Condamine River* as an example of destruction from Fracking. The water can be lit up on fire; as the escaping gas leaks out in the form of bubbles. Two wells have been placed beside the *Condamine River* where most of the gas is bubbling; to release the excess of leaking gas. It is being burnt off into the atmosphere to alleviate the issue, but leakages into the river from the underground pipes have also now become an issue. This has caused numerous mass fish-deaths as well as having the flow on effects to other fauna and flora in the area. This will need to be monitored, controlled and fixed for many years to come.

A farmer from Wyoming in the USA, John Fenton, once believed Fracking was a more efficient and less invasive way to extract underground resources and previously had no issues living near a fracking field. His wife has since developed consistent nose bleeds and severe medical conditions, as does his neighbours. The family have to open doors and windows when showering as there is an excessive level of gas that is contained in the water they use. He is concerned for his families and communities health.

The water in the area is unusable. The surrounding land has suffered.

We are still looking for scientific evidence that Fracking is safe. So far I only see negative impacts it has made on the land, air and water. Fracking is not good for the environment or human health. Pipes can, and do, split over time from ground movement. There are no guarantees that this won't happen. Monitoring the pipes is impossible and only obvious after the damage is done.

Fracking has already been deemed unsafe throughout the world.

The United States EPA warns of gases or fluids moving to groundwater resources. QLD has had an increase in health issues to people close to Fracking wells; tests reveal heavy metal levels in humans, animals and water ways are increasing. Fishing in the NT is a big industry, as is Tourism, industries that rely heavily on the natural escarpments and waterways of our beautiful Territory. If our natural resources are diminished or deemed unusable, not only will these large Industries will be greatly affected, but our Farming, industry and lifestyles will also be greatly affected.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are not secure

- There are no assurances to protect the water.
- Are there rehabilitation funds set aside in trust by the company?

Farmers and their land rely on fresh, clean water and is a human necessity and should be prioritised. Farmers and pastoralists should have priority over their land, not the mining companies. With the current heavily allocated water in the NT, there needs to be a thorough overall of water allocation, as some groundwater sources are already known to have limited capacities for further allocation of water.

Fracking will need to use a significant percentage of the unallocated water; Fracking uses over 10 million litres with each injection. If they are successful in gaining an exploration or extraction licence, companies should be carefully monitored to ensure they have the correct water licences to extract.

Cement cased pipes are only a short term fix as the deterioration of the pipes will eventually lead to contamination; the pipes are under a lot of pressure and the earth moves with seismic activity, causing friction and damage. Continual monitoring should occur prior to all fracking and mining activities. Monitoring should be prioritised, prior-to and be ongoing throughout the life of fracking and beyond. Monitoring must be completed from a range of professionals, Government agencies or independent consultants; to ensure that the risk of corruption is minimised. Higher taxes should be compulsory for any mining company, due to the high risk of destruction to the Australian landscape. Rehabilitation costs should be compulsory and paid by the company, into a fund for the future, prior to the start of any production.

There are more than enough alternative energy sources; wind, hydro, geothermal and solar power, fracking should be the last alternative on the list as an energy source for Australia.

So, I hope the Northern Territory and Federal Government will not approve Fracking as a quick fix to get the Economy back on track, to the detriment of us all; our water, our beautiful country, our culture, our children, our superb NT.

Who will be responsible and accountable for failing the 'Duty of Care' to Territorians?

Fracking is not worth the High risk. There is overwhelming evidence that damage will occur. Once the damage is done by Fracking, it will be irreversible; people will not be able to live healthy in the Northern Territory - the people and the Land will suffer.

As Isaac Newton once noted "*for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.*" This statement is to action, before a tragic reaction.

All of Australia should be 'Frack Free'.

Water is essential for life

It is imperative that we say **No** to Fracking to protect our unique Territory.

Thank you for listening.

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