



28 April 2017

Fracking Inquiry Panel
c/o email – fracking.inquiry@nt.gov.au

Dear Panel Members

RE: Submission to the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the NT

Regional Development Australia Northern Territory (RDA NT) is an incorporated, not-for-profit, community-based association funded by both the Australian Government and the NT Government. We work with the three tiers of government, community groups and businesses to build on the competitive advantages of the region and drive sustainable regional development.

RDA NT believes that the risks associated with hydraulic fracturing can be appropriately managed with the implementation of a world's best-practice regulatory framework. We endorse the continuation of the moratorium until such a framework is in place. We support strong consultative processes to ensure industry, stakeholder, and community input into the conditions under which hydraulic fracturing should occur in the Northern Territory. We believe greater efforts should be made, in collaboration with stakeholder organisations, to provide quality information to the public and better inform the fracking debate. Following a period of robust and exhaustive consultation, and the full implementation of best-practice regulation, RDA NT endorses the removal of the moratorium. The Northern Territory Government should guide investment in the Northern Territory's gas industry so that the maximum local benefit is realised.

RDA NT's primary concerns are as follows:

- Independent regulation – The regulation of fracking and associated activity needs to have an appropriate level of independence. The oversight of compliance with the regulations must give stakeholders and the public confidence that the regulations are being fully adhered to and cannot be evaded.

- Chemical transportation – A chemical spill during transportation of high risk materials to or from the drill site is believed to be one of the main hazards associated with fracking. Regulations should include either specific reference to conditions for the transportation of chemicals, or clearly described links to existing regulations guiding the safe transportation of chemicals throughout the Northern Territory.
- Regulation of chemicals – Where possible regulations should guide industries choice of chemicals to reduce the risks associated with a chemical spill and/or contamination of water resources. Where a number of chemicals are available to perform a single function and some are relatively low risk, any high-risk chemicals should be prohibited on the basis that there are acceptable low risk alternatives.
- Aquifer protection – The protection of all aquifers must be the highest priority in the regulatory framework. For example, there should be a regulated minimum distance between any potable water resources and any fracking activity.
- Competition for potable water – Wherever possible fracking activities should only be undertaken using non-potable water resources. The use of potable water resources should only be possible following a strict and fully transparent approvals process.
- Acknowledgement of local conditions – Regulations need to be conservative and appropriate for the local conditions. For example, the engineering and construction of waste water ponds must account for the most extreme possible rainfall event.
- Biosecurity – The necessity to negotiate with landholder’s biosecurity plans that guide all land access for fracking and associated activities must be prescribed in the regulations. Biosecurity risks range from weed infestation through to the spread of pests and diseases which threaten agricultural productivity.
- Legacy fund – Appropriate industry bond arrangements must be in place to ensure that the capital exists to address any legacy issues.

Please do not hesitate to contact our CEO, Kate Peake, on telephone [REDACTED] or by email [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely



Mike Reed
Chair, RDA NT



An Australian Government Initiative