Andrew J Andrejewskis
25 April 2017

SUBMISSION to the NT INQUIRY ON FRACKING (chaired by the Hon Justice Pepper)

Dear Panel

My name is **Andrew J Andrejewskis** and I submit the following for your review into the use of unconventional gas and the use of hydraulic fracturing in the Northern Territory.

There have been many Inquiries on this and similar subjects around the world and in Australia in recent times. Virtually all credible (non-political) Inquiries have arrived at similar conclusions, in that exploring for, and developing gas and oil, from unconventional sources (shale) with the use of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) is unlikely to pose any significant risk to groundwater (aquifers) or to human health, providing appropriate robust regulations (including environmental aspects) are in place, which are adhered to and enforced, such that the risk is acceptable and as low as reasonably practical (ALARP).

The following is some of the recent credible outcomes of such Inquiries

1. The 2014 Hawke (referred to (p11) in the Background and Issues Paper dated 20 February 2017 recommended, with the appropriate oversight and care for the environment and social issues the NT Government proceed with the exploration and development of unconventional gas with the use of hydraulic fracturing.
2. The work of the 2014 Hawke Report was enhanced and developed by the 2015 Hawke Report and the 2016 Hunter Report, both of which are referenced in your Background and Issues Paper (20 Feb 2017).
3. Prior to the 2014 Hawke Report, the Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) Report "Engineering Energy: Unconventional Gas Production A Study of Shale Gas in Australia" 2013, found that with the appropriate safeguards in place shale gas (unconventional) with the use of fracking represents no greater risk than conventional gas, although certain regulatory oversight needs to be maintained and adhered to maintain a risk profile which is ALARP.
4. The NSW Chief Scientist Professor Dr Mary O Kane undertook a study into Coal Seam Gas (CSG) and while CSG is not a subject of this Inquiry, the Report's findings are nonetheless relevant, in that on page 7 of the Report "There is a perception in some parts of the community that CSG extraction is potentially more damaging and dangerous than other extractive industries. This perception was heightened following the release of the American movie Gasland in 2010. The Review examined this issue in detail and concluded that while the CSG industry has several aspects that need careful attention, as do almost all industries, it is not significantly more likely to be more damaging or dangerous than other extractive industries". The relevancy is two- fold, in that the NSW Chief Scientist review debunked the hype associated with the movie 'Gaslands' , and recognised each extractive industry has its own unique characteristics which must be recognised and regulated and managed appropriately to achieve ALARP.
5. The South Australian Natural Resources Committee recently completed its two year investigation into unconventional gas (fracking) and issued its report on 30 Nov 2016. Its key recommendation against its first term of reference was that unconventional gas (fracking) is unlikely to have any impact on groundwater, which includes aquifers.

6 As mentioned, there have been many Inquiries worldwide, but the UK is also very relevant to Australia, as its ownership to mineral rights is similar to Australia. The UK had a very rigorous inquiry carried out by the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering specifically complete a report on hydraulic fracturing and shale gas. Professor Sir Mark Walport, UK Chief Scientist, gave a speech predominantly focussed on Risk and Innovation in Germany in September 2014, summed up the findings, with the following

"There are really 3 science and engineering concerns about hydraulic fracturing (fracking). The first of these is: will it cause earth tremors? The second is: will you get contamination of the water table? And the third is: will there be fugitive release of the methane gas? (In other words if you leak all the gas then you lose the advantage of it as a fossil fuel). And what the science and the engineering tells you is that this is a drilling technology and no drilling technology is completely risk-free. **But if it is done well, if it is engineered well, if it is governed well, then it is as safe as any other form of drilling**, recognising that there is no 'free lunch', there is nothing that is completely risk-free." He went on to note
"Those are the engineering concerns, and that's what the Royal Academy of Engineers' report said and actually multiple other reports have all essentially said the same thing. But the public or groups who are protesting, at least in some parts of the world, about fracking are coming at in from the values angle and from the "my pain, your gain'. And so there's a group that dislikes fracking because they dislike fossil fuels, there is another group that dislikes fracking because they just don't like big companies, and then there is a third group who just do not want the inconvenience of having something industrial development happening in their "back yard." The referenced speech can be found here http://bit.ly/1CVyur7

7. I further submit that hydraulic fracking and development of vast reserves of gas and oil from so-called unconventional reservoirs has provided much production in Australia and overseas for the benefit of the peoples of the respective countries and as such should be encouraged.

It is on this basis, that I urge the Panel to adopt a factual and evidence based approach toward assessing the potential risks regarding the exploration for, and the development of, unconventional gas and oil, and the use of hydraulic fracturing to enhance its production, providing that at all times, there is a robust regulatory regime which through strong enforcement enables the risk to be reduced to be ALARP.

Yours sincerely

Contact details:
e-mail [redacted]
mobile [redacted]

References:

Royal Society report on fraccing in the UK
Independent report by the Royal Society and Institute of Engineers in the UK re shale gas production and fraccing.
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Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) "Engineering Energy: Unconventional Gas Production A Study of Shale Gas in Australia" Final Report.
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