



Draft Final Report Plain English Version

1. The Fracking Inquiry released its draft Final Report on 12 December 2017.
2. The draft Final Report talks about the work done by the Inquiry. It talks about the problems with fracking and how those problems can be dealt with.
3. The Inquiry made 120 recommendations. The recommendations are listed in the report.
4. This is a plain English summary of the key points in the draft Final Report.
5. This is the last chance you have to talk to the Fracking Inquiry.
6. The Inquiry will give the Final Report to the NT Government in March 2018.

Key points

7. There is currently a ban or 'moratorium' on fracking in the NT.
8. The Inquiry cannot decide to remove the ban or keep it. This is a job for the NT Government. The NT Government will decide whether to lift the ban on fracking when the Inquiry is finished.
9. The Inquiry's job is to tell Chief Minister Michael Gunner what the problems of fracking are and how those problems can be dealt with.
10. The Inquiry is not the NT Government and it is not doing Land Council business.
11. The Inquiry has heard from lots of people that are worried about fracking.
12. People are mainly worried about water but there are also worries about the land, keeping communities and culture strong and protecting country.
13. The Inquiry has also heard from people that think there are benefits from fracking, like jobs and royalties.

Work so far

14. The Inquiry first met in December 2016. They have met nine times.
15. The Inquiry met with the South Australian and Queensland Governments to talk about how they deal with problems with fracking.
16. The Inquiry went to Moomba in South Australia and Mereenie in the NT to look at fracking of tight gas. Tight gas is not the same as shale gas but on the surface it has the same types of drilling equipment and trucks.
17. The Inquiry has also been to Queensland to look at coal seam gas, or "CSG", operations.
18. The Panel visited some pastoral properties in the NT and spoke with pastoralists about their concerns.
19. The Inquiry released a *Background and Issues Paper* in February 2017. It mainly talked about the problems with fracking.

20. In March 2017 the Inquiry did public hearings and community meetings across the NT to talk about the Issues Paper and heard what people like and don't like about fracking.
21. The Inquiry released an *Interim Report* in July 2017 to update the community and get feedback.
22. In August 2017 the Inquiry did more public hearings and community meetings across the NT.
23. The Inquiry has received more than 500 letters from people about fracking. They are on the Inquiry's website.

Where is the gas and where does fracking happen?

24. There is gas trapped inside very hard shale rock that is a long, long way underground.
25. Gas companies drill a thin hole, also called a well, deep into the earth/ground all the way to the shale rock.
26. Fracking is needed to get the gas out of the shale rock.
27. Fracking is where water and chemicals are pushed deep underground to crack shale rock and let gas flow to the surface.
28. The gas is used to create electricity.

Well integrity

29. Gas wells need to be strong so that nothing can get out of the well. If the steel and cement around the well breaks then gas, water and chemicals could leak out into the air or groundwater.
30. The Inquiry says that wells and groundwater must be checked and tested all the time to make sure there are no problems (**Recs 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.8, 7.10**). If there are problems then the gas companies have to fix the problem or pay to get the problem fixed. It is not up to the farmers or the community to pay for the gas companies' mistakes (or accidents).
31. The Inquiry made a lot of recommendations about how to ensure wells are strong and that nothing can escape from the wells. (**Rec 5.4, 7.10**).

Waste water

32. Lots of water goes down a well to do fracking and when it comes back there are bad things in the water that you do not want in the groundwater.
33. The Inquiry says that the Government and gas companies need to get a good plan to get rid of the wastewater/water that is wasted (**Rec 5.6, 7.11, 7.17**).
34. The Inquiry says that the bad water should not be put back into the ground (**Rec 7.8, 7.13**).
35. The bad water should also not be released into rivers or dams (**Rec 7.16**).
36. Plans need to be in place to make sure that none of the bad water spills anywhere. This includes on the areas where fracking happens and on roads when they move chemicals and waste water in trucks or by train (**Rec 5.6, 7.10, 7.11, 7.12**).

Water supply

37. A lot of water is needed for fracking and there must be enough water for everyone, including farmers, Aboriginal people, plants and animals.
38. The gas industry will use between 2,500 and 5,000 megalitres each year in the Beetaloo Sub-basin. This is between 1,000 and 2,000 Olympic swimming pools.
39. The Inquiry made a lot of recommendations to make sure that there is enough water for everyone.

40. The Inquiry says we need to know more about how much groundwater there is, which way it goes, how much new water comes in, and who uses it, before we take it out of the ground. Big studies over big areas must be done to help us all learn about groundwater (**Rec 7.4, 7.7, 7.15, 7.17, 7.18, 7.19, 15.1**).
41. Government needs to put good plans and laws in place to ensure water is properly managed and that there is enough for everyone (**Rec 7.6**).
42. The laws (the Water Act) needs to change so that gas companies need to get a licence to use water, just like everyone else (**Rec 7.1**).
43. Surface water, like lakes and rivers, should never be used for fracking (**Rec 7.5**).
44. Gas wells should not be closer than 1 km to a water bore (**Rec 7.7**).

Water quality

45. The Inquiry looked at ways that the bad water from fracking can get into groundwater and how it can be stopped.
46. Some people told the Inquiry that fracking shale that is deep underground can cause bad water and gas to leak up into groundwater. The Inquiry thinks that this is very unlikely because of the very big distance between the shale and the groundwater and the special way the cement and steel are used in the well.
47. The Inquiry heard that spills of bad water can contaminate good water, especially in the wet season/rainy season. The Inquiry says that this problem can be fixed with good planning, using strong storage tanks, and ongoing monitoring (**Rec 7.10, 7.11, 7.12, 7.15, 14.24**).
48. The Inquiry heard that companies sometimes put water that has already been used for fracking back into the ground after they have taken the bad chemicals out of it. This should not be allowed (**Rec 7.8, 7.13**).
49. The Inquiry heard that gas and bad water can come out of wells especially when they are very old. The Inquiry says that wells need to be made so that this does not happen (**Rec 5.4, 7.10**). The wells must be monitored for a very long time (**Rec 5.2**).

Land

50. The NT is a special place with lots of plants and animals that are not found anywhere else in the world.
51. We need to understand the plants and animals better before the fracking industry starts selling gas. This means doing a big study of all the plants and animals (**Rec 8.1, 15.1**).
52. There are special areas where fracking should never happen, like national parks, conservation areas, and places that are important to Aboriginal people (**Rec 14.4**).
53. We need to know where weeds are and we need gas companies to stop them spreading (**Rec 8.2, 8.3**).
54. Government should look at helping Aboriginal land ranger programs to look after country (**Rec 8.9**).
55. Roads and pipelines could split up animal and plant families so the land used by the industry must be small and planned well and cleaned up when the gas company is finished (**Rec 8.6, 8.7, 8.1, 8.13, 8.14, 8.15**).
56. The gas industry might change current fire patterns. For example, roads can act as barriers to the spread of fire. We need to make sure the gas industry doesn't change how fire is used to manage country or cause bad fires (**Rec 8.4**).

Greenhouse gas emissions

57. Carbon dioxide and methane are gases that are released when gas is extracted from the earth/ground. These gases are "greenhouse gases", which means they contribute to climate change. Methane is a much worse greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.
58. The Inquiry looked at how much methane escapes during "upstream" development (when gas is being taken out of the ground on country).

59. Gas can leak out of wells and pipes. Leaks can be reduced by 23% if good practices, including new technologies, are used (**Rec 9.1**).
60. Methane leaks from wells need to be checked to make sure none is leaking out. If there are leaks then the gas companies need to quickly fix it (**Rec 9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5, 9.6**).

Public health

61. The Inquiry looked at chemicals that could enter the environment from fracking. These include chemicals that are put into the fracking fluid and chemicals that come up from underground.
62. The Inquiry thinks that chemicals used in fracking are not highly toxic/poisonous and will not hurt/make sick humans or wildlife if they get into the environment.
63. The Inquiry is more concerned about toxic chemicals that come up from deep underground, such as benzene, ethylbenzene, toluene and xylenes (called "BTEX") and radioactive materials that are found deep underground (called "NORMs"). BTEX is not allowed to be put into fracking fluid but sometimes BTEX comes from underground.
64. The Inquiry thinks that big studies need to happen before fracking happens to make sure there are no health problems/no one gets sick (**Rec 10.1, 15.1**).
65. The Inquiry thinks fracking should occur not close to communities and other important areas (**Rec 10.3, 14.4**).

Aboriginal people and their culture

66. Aboriginal people live in the areas where there is shale gas.
67. It is important that Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal culture and traditions are not worse off because of fracking. Sacred sites cannot be damaged by fracking.
68. Aboriginal communities need to be given more and better information about the good and bad things about fracking. Interpreters should always be used where people don't speak English (**Rec 11.5, 11.6**).
69. Gas companies need to talk with custodians/Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority before any fracking happens (**Rec 11.1, 11.2**).
70. The law needs to be made stronger to ensure that underground sacred sites are protected from fracking (**Rec 11.3**).
71. Aboriginal people need to be spoken to and listened to from early on to make sure their community and culture is protected (**Rec 11.1, 11.2, 11.8, 15.1**).

Native title and Aboriginal land

72. About half the NT is Aboriginal land and the other half is native title.
73. On native title land Traditional Owners can negotiate an agreement with gas companies.
74. On Aboriginal land, Traditional Owners can say "no" at exploration but not production. The Inquiry thinks that Traditional Owners should keep the right to say "no".

Social impacts

75. The Inquiry heard that the gas industry could have a big impact on communities in the Territory. The social impacts of fracking are things like workers in high-vis clothing and more cars being around, more crime, more humbug, and problems/trouble from more royalty money.
76. The Inquiry says there needs to be a big study about how communities will cope if fracking goes ahead to make sure communities benefit/get good things from it. Government and industry need to work with communities to make sure they industry doesn't cause problems in the community and that the right services are there for people (**Recs 12.4 - 12.16, 15.1**).

77. The Inquiry also thinks there could be a big impact on roads from all the gas company trucks and fly-in fly out (FIFO) workers. The Inquiry thinks that government and the gas industry should make sure roads are upgraded/always fixed and stay safe/people don't have accident because of bad roads (**Rec 12.1, 12.2, 12.3**).
78. The Inquiry asked an independent company called Coffey Services Australia to help understand the impacts that fracking might have on communities and how they can be dealt with.
79. There were some problems with a company called CCC that Coffey used to help it talk to the community. Another company called IAS came out and spoke to communities again about social problems with fracking. IAS will give the Inquiry this information before the Final Report comes out.
80. If the Government says yes to fracking then the Government and gas companies will need to come and talk to the communities again.

Economic impacts

81. The Inquiry asked an independent company called ACIL Allen Consulting to help it understand the money story of fracking. ACIL told the Panel that there will be jobs and royalties for government and Aboriginal people from fracking. It's hard to know how many jobs right now because we don't know exactly how much gas there is.
82. The Inquiry heard that the community is concerned that the benefits (royalties) of fracking won't go to the communities that are close to/affected by fracking. We want the Government to look at ways the communities can benefit (**Rec 13.1**).
83. The gas industry should work closely with Government and communities to make sure local people get jobs and local businesses get work (**Recs 13.2 – 13.8**).
84. The community is also concerned that the gas industry will be bad for other industries, like tourism operators, pastoralists and farmers. Gas companies and Government should work with other industries to make sure fracking does not cause problems for other industries (**Rec 13.9, 13.10**).

Regulations (Laws)

85. The community does not trust the gas industry or the Government to protect the environment.
86. The best way to protect the environment is to have strong laws and a strong regulator (that is, strong government) with enough people and cars (motorcars) to check up on industry (**Rec 14.1**).
87. There are lots of ways the law can be improved/made stronger.
88. Information should be made available to the public so that everyone understands what's going on. This includes all plans that have been approved (**Rec 14.14**), the chemicals used in fracking (**Rec 5.5, 7.9, 10.2**), results of any monitoring/keeping an eye on things (**Rec 9.5, 12.5**), and any problems that might happen (**Rec 14.15**).
89. The community should be able to have their say about fracking. The community should be able to have a say about what land is used by gas companies to make sure it's not land where fracking shouldn't happen (**Rec 14.2, 14.9, 14.14**). There might be sacred sites or important hunting areas that should be protected.
90. Gas companies should get an agreement with farmers and pastoralists as well as traditional owners before they do any fracking (**Rec 14.5, 14.6**). The Inquiry thinks that pastoralists should be paid some money by the gas companies (**Rec 14.7, 14.8**).
91. Government must make sure there is always enough money available to clean up and fix country they are no longer using or if a spill or a problem occurs (**Rec 14.12, 14.13**).
92. People that are affected by the industry should be able to go to court and have a judge listen to their problems (**Rec 14.21, 14.22, 14.23**).

93. It should be up to the gas companies, and not traditional owners and pastoralists, to prove in court that they *didn't* cause a problem, like water contamination. This is fairer than making traditional owners and pastoralists prove that the gas company *did* cause the problem (**Rec 14.29**).
94. The people that promote the gas industry in Government should be different from the people that have the job of making sure the gas industry does the right thing. (**Rec 14.31, 14.32**).

What next?

95. The Inquiry may need to make some changes to the draft Final Report after the Inquiry finishes talking with everyone.
96. The Inquiry will give the Final Report to Chief Minister Michael Gunner in March 2018 and then the Government will make a decision about fracking.

Further information

97. You can contact the Inquiry and tell them/the Inquiry what you think about fracking at any time.
98. You can make a video or audio recording and send it to the Inquiry.
99. The Inquiry's contact information is:

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