Dear Senators,

I was born, raised, reside and own property in the Northern Territory.

I strongly oppose oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin and surrounding areas. Opening new gas fields is clearly out of step with the rest of the world, which is rapidly moving in the opposite direction - the pressure for Australia to achieve short-term emission reduction targets as well as zero emissions by, or before, 2050 is only going to increase.

I wish to raise the following concerns in respect to plans for the Beetaloo Basin and surrounding areas:

1. Federal pressure to approve fracking in the NT

I believe GST allocation was used to force the NT Government to approve fracking. The manipulation of the amount of GST provided to the Territory around the time of the NT Fracking enquiry was transparent and tasteless.
https://www.google.com.au/amp/s/amp.abc.net.au/article/9623028

https://www.google.com.au/amp/s/amp.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/apr/23/morrison-denies-northern-territorys-extra-260m-is-for-lifting-fracking-ban

2. Territory Economic Recovery (TERC)

The NTG recently received and is implementing the Territory economic recovery final report https://ntrebound.nt.gov.au/reports/final-report.

The NT Government appears to be using this as a licence to promote development at any cost.

I'm concerned the TERC agenda was ideological and not evidence driven, being led by gas industry stalwart Andrew Liveris.

3. Impact on plans for fracking in the MacArthur River Basin and other areas of the NT

Fracking is not just proposed in the Beetaloo Basin but now also the MacArthur Basin.

In the Beetaloo, the 'Pepper enquiry' *https://frackinginquiry.nt.gov.au/inquiry-reports?a=494327* (which I believe is already redundant due emissions reduction progress in the rest of the world) requires the strategic regional economic baseline assessment and other measures including water allocation plans (recommendation 7.7) before commercial fracking can happen.

This doesn't seem to be happening in the McArthur Basin.

I'm concerned about this because proposals in these areas, made by companies such as Imperial Oil and Gas, could impact precious shallow groundwater resources which support rivers, wetlands and sacred sites, such as those in the Limmen National Park.

As a resident in Alice Springs I'm concerned Central Australia will be next.

4. Opportunity costs to sustainable industries

I'm concerned about the opportunity cost of investing in fracking. The Territory's global comparative advantage in an industrialising and heavily populated world is its space, ecosystems and continuing strong Aboriginal knowledge and culture.

This generation's greed and short term-ism jeopardises this. I urge a big picture, long-term assessment of where the Commonwealth should invest. I believe the focus should not be on building infrastructure for gas companies but caring for the country promoting and enhancing its true values with a view to levering a sustainable economic return from these.

This applies not just to fracking but other carbon hungry activities like land clearing and running cattle on rangelands. There is an opportunity to store carbon, build biodiversity and build a brand around these. The Commonwealth must lead as it has the capacity to act over timescales longer than election and budget cycles or the COVID crisis.

5. Trust in Traditional Custodians

Finally – I am aware the Traditional custodians oppose fracking. I trust their leadership in managing country as it is based on 60 000 years of sustainable decision making and practice.

Thank you for holding this inquiry. I urge you to show the responsibility and vision that has so far been lacking.

Regards,
Jacqueline Arnold