

Fracking in the NT – the 2022 Federal Election Case Card

THE ISSUE

Both the Federal Government and opposition are promising more funding for fracking

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Gas-led Recovery

The Federal Morrison and Territory Gunner governments are planning a 'gas-led recovery strategy' from the Covid-19 crisis.

The Beetaloo sub basin is at the centre of the Federal Government's plan. This plan promises more than \$220 million in new funding for the sub-basin development including:

- Advancing over \$50 million to support \$200 million of exploration activity before 30 June 2022.
- Providing \$174 million in new NT road funding to suit the gas industry's needs (1).

The Federal government gave \$28 million in subsidies to fracking companies operating in the Beetaloo sub-basin to expedite fracking in the last year.

The Federal opposition and Gunner governments have been in lockstep with this corporate welfare, despite strong community opposition.

WHY THIS ISSUE IS A CONCERN

Fracking the Beetaloo Basin could increase Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by 22%, potentially breaching our international commitments (2)

In May 2021 the International Energy Agency (IPCC) stated that for the world to avoid catastrophic climate change, no new fossil fuel projects should be approved from 2021.

New gas projects are also incompatible with Federal and Territory Governments' climate policies, which both promise net zero emissions by 2050.

The Federal Labor opposition has committed to immediate deep cuts reducing emissions by 43% by 2030. Subsidising fracking in the Beetaloo calls into question whether Federal Labor is serious about this commitment.

The pre-conditions for fracking to occur in the Territory have not been met

Before the Gunner government decided to support fracking it commissioned an inquiry into fracking (the Pepper Inquiry (3)).

The Inquiry found that the danger fracking poses to water resources, community health and the environment could **only** be reduced to an acceptable level if **all** of its 135 recommendations were **fully implemented**.

Only a fraction of the recommendations have been implemented (4):

- the NT government still has no offsets policy for fracking in the Beetaloo. It cannot explain how it will meet crucial Recommendation 9.8 that all lifecycle emissions from fracking activity be fully offset.
- There is no Water Allocation Plan for the region. There is no way of knowing whether the NT Government can safely and sustainably allocate fracking companies the enormous amounts of water they need.

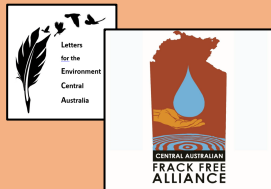


Companies are currently undertaking exploratory drilling in the Beetaloo Basin, with the aim of moving to production in ~ 2025 if the results of exploratory drilling prove satisfactory and global gas prices hold.



Analysis completed for the Federal Government in 2021 found that if the expansion of the fracking industry in the NT continues to be supported by Federal and Territory governments, gas companies like Origin could be drilling and fracking **20-40 new wells annually** in the coming years, and **200-300 per year** if the industry goes into full-scale production.

This equates to 1-2 million tonnes of greenhouse gases in the coming years, and 10-15 million tonnes every year for a fracking industry operating at full-scale.



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Risks to human & ecosystem health

Risk of release of poisons into water, air, soil and geological formations.

Each 'fracked' well uses tens of thousands of litres of chemicals.

Risks stem from:

- Contamination from the high pressure pumping of fracking fluid into rock formations targeted for gas extraction
- Potential chemical spills during the transport and processing of toxic fracking fluid.

These toxic chemicals are poisonous to people and ecosystems, and can persist in the environment for many decades.

The NT's water regulations are completely inadequate for managing the risks of the proposed drilling program

The Beetaloo region does not have a water allocation plan. Without this plan, given the glaring inadequacies in the NT's existing water regulations, the tremendous amount of water required for fracking activities represents a new wave of 'water colonialism', whereby the development of Australia's water resources delivers little economic development benefit to Aboriginal people, marginalises them as decision makers, and deprives them of their rights to use and protect their waters (5).

Gas companies have not obtained the free prior and informed consent of Traditional Owners in the areas in which they are operating

The Pepper Inquiry highlighted insufficient provision of information by gas companies to Aboriginal communities as a significant concern, noting that "the knowledge of the likely impacts of this industry within the Aboriginal community in the Beetaloo Sub basin, and more widely, is wholly inadequate".

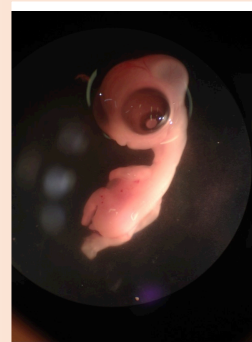
Since the Pepper Inquiry concluded, the validity of pre-mortatorium agreements between fracking companies and Traditional Owners to explore shale gas in the Beetaloo Sub-basin have been called into question (6).

Research conducted by the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research suggests that "most, if not all, exploration permits issued in the Northern Territory for unconventional gas were issued in the absence of free prior informed consent" (7).



Fracking uses and contaminates huge volumes of water, which is then too toxic to be properly recycled, reused, or fed back into aquifers.

Waste water storage tanks are left open and risk overflow during heavy rainfall in the wet season.



Of the 240 chemicals used or created during the fracking process whose biological effects on humans have been studied, 157 (65%) are reproductive or developmental toxins.

Another 781 chemicals used in fracking lack toxicity data entirely (8).

INFORMATION / ACTION REQUEST

Call on the Federal opposition to:

Stop funding fracking

Rule out any new subsidies for oil and gas projects and infrastructure, including exploration drilling and pipelines and the cost of carbon emissions

Exclude oil and gas infrastructure from eligibility for funding under the Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund.

Redirect funding for fracking to activities that meet the needs of the people in the Beetaloo area.

Protect water resources from fracking risks

Strengthen the water trigger in the Federal environment laws so it applies to fracking for shale and tight gas resources.

Make nationally significant water resources and their catchments, including drinking water areas and ecological sites like Lake Woods, no-go zones for coal and gas.



Lake Woods, near Elliot in the Barkly is the largest freshwater lake in the Northern Territory. For millennia the lake known as Jurrkulu, by its traditional custodians has been a reliable and celebrated source of water for the Mud Burra and Jingulu people (9).



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Write To

Candidates for the seat of Lingiari

Marion Scrymour (ALP)

c/o Warren Snowdon Electoral Office
Unit 3
12 Gregory Tce
PO Box 4007
Alice Springs

Damien Ryan (CLP)

Unit 2
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Senator

Malarndirri McCarthy (ALP)

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Candidate for the Senate

Jacinta Price (CLP)

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NT 0810

REFERENCES

1. <https://www.industry.gov.au/news/the-beetaloo-strategic-basin-plan-released-as-part-of-the-gas-fired-economic-recovery>
2. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-02-29/beetaloo-basin-gas-field-could-jeopardise-paris-targets/12002164>
3. *Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory, Final Report of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory* (2018, Darwin) 259.
4. https://www.lockthegate.org.au/only_a_quarter_of_fracking_recommendations_implemented_in_full_nearly_four_years_since_inquiry
5. Water colonialism and Indigenous water Justice in South-eastern Australia, Lana D. Hartwig a,b, Sue Jackson a,b, Francis Markham c and Natalie Osborne
6. Dr Shelley Marshall, *First Peoples and Land Justice Issues in Australia: Addressing Deficits in Corporate Accountability*
7. Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, *Hydraulic Fracturing and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in the Northern Territory: A Literature Review* (University of Technology Sydney, Sydney, 2018) p 16.
8. <http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/sites/thecornerhouse.org.uk/files/ADVISORY%20OPINION%20ON%20FRACKING.pdf>
9. Protect Country Alliance Lake Woods Flyer
https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/lockthegate/pages/6354/attachments/original/1571978553/Lake_Woods_Flyer_v2.pdf?1571978553

IMAGES

Map <https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/January%202021/document/beetaloo-strategic-basin-plan.pdf>

Beetaloo fracking <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-11-03/nt-federal-court-hearing-climate-change-beetaloo-fracking-grants/100590504>

Lake Woods <https://www.barkly.nt.gov.au/communities/elliott>



Fracking in the NT – the 2022 Federal Election Letter Writing Kit

Your name
Address

Recipient Address

Date

Dear ...

Introduce yourself e.g. I am a resident of Alice Springs

Identify the issue you are concerned about (you can use the issue from the case card)

e.g. I am concerned that the government is funding fracking

Include some facts (you can use some facts from the case card)

e.g. the Federal and NT governments plans a 'gas led recovery'

They plan to spend \$200 million on fracking in the Beetaloo

Explain in your own words why this issue is a concern (you can use some facts from the case card)

e.g. Fracking the Beetaloo Basin could increase Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by 22%, potentially breaching our international commitments

The pre-conditions for fracking to occur in the Territory have not been met

Risks to human & ecosystem health

Gas companies have not obtained the free prior and informed consent of Tradition Owners in the areas in which they are operating

Tell the Minister what you want them to do (you can use the "action requests" from the case card)

e.g. Stop funding fracking

Protect water resources from fracking risk

I look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely,

Your Name