

fracking inquiry

From: Rosemary Sullivan [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, 25 February 2018 4:45 PM
To: fracking inquiry
Subject: Submission
Attachments: Fracking submission 2.docx

Please find attached my submission, and I can be contact on this email address should you need to clarify details.

Thank you,

Rosemary Sullivan
Cave Creek Station, Mataranka
Writer and Teacher

I recently attended the Mataranka Community Forum on 15th February, 2018 about the draft final report of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the NT.

From the conduct of the meeting and the points discussed, I note the following:

NLC Meetings and Agreements **Recommendation 11.7**

Some non-Aboriginal local opponents of the oil and gas industry complained they were asked to leave a Northern Land Council meeting. Why they expected to attend such a meeting was not clear. The NLC is governed by the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and I am baffled that anyone should expect to attend these meetings without a specific invitation from the NLC.

NLC CEO Joe Morrison is surely more than capable of effectively communicating with Aboriginal people and the suggestion from outsiders the NLC should have had a specialist interpreter for their meeting seems bizarre.

Publishing the nature of exploration and mining agreements with companies may be damaging to a number of stakeholders, and in particular more vulnerable members of the Aboriginal community who are party to an agreement. This recommendation may mean activists can trawl through the details of such agreements, find fault with them and then attempt to drag them into the courts and hold up or bog down development; they are not to serve the interests of the traditional owners, but instead to serve the interests of the environmental activists and the trust fund organisations whose over-arching interests they really represent.

I urge the Panel to consider these motivations when finalising your report and have regard to the deeply disturbing level of violence and intimidation often imposed in these circumstances. Most people lobbying to this end have little or no understanding of the processes involved in such agreements, having never engaged in them. Further, they have no appreciation of the effects such recommendations may have on less powerful and more vulnerable Aboriginal people.

Activists from Elsewhere

Why was Lock The Gate activist Lauren Mellor allowed to dominate much of the Mataranka meeting, barely drawing breath? It was listed as a *community forum*. She is not a local, despite what she would say to tourists at markets when attempting to get them to sign petitions against fracking, but merely a paid activist from Darwin.

My one disappointment in the conduct of the meeting was that she was not only allowed to be there, but to have so much say, ensuring the forum ran massively over time. This did, however, give the Panel the opportunity to discover what a lack of development means ... no place to get hot food at 9 pm on a Thursday night, despite Mataranka considering itself a major tourism centre. Nowhere to eat in air-conditioning, except at one service station that by then was closed.

That is the reality we deal with daily, not the utopian fantasies of those who romanticise the 'outback', having arrived in the Territory comparatively recently, before they return down south.

Regulation: Be Careful What You Wish For **Recommendations 8.2 8.3**

Other industries (tourism, pastoral, agriculture, services, government) should hope the same level of regulation recommended by the Panel will not be unleashed on their businesses.

Surely there is no philosophical consistency in demanding the shale gas industry is not allowed to exist, or is virtually regulated out of existence, whilst other industries are seriously impacting the natural values of riparian and savannah areas with no consequences to themselves but truly awful consequences for the natural environment and ultimately the taxpayer.

Mataranka's famous springs (Rainbow Spring and thermal pool; Bitter Springs down Martin Road) are a case in point.

A brief walk around areas adjacent to these springs reveals a landscape thoroughly infested with declared weeds including, but not limited to, the following:

- neem trees, Class B and C – *Azadirachta indica*
- yellow oleander (very toxic) which can cause serious illness and even death in children if the sap or fruits are eaten – Environmental weed
- bellyache bush – *Jatropha gossypifolia* (a Weed of National Significance)
- rubber bush- *Calotropis procera* Class B and C

It appears the owners of these facilities take little responsibility for the state of these facilities and the spread of noxious weeds from their premises, yet wish to attack other industries and deny them the chance to exist.

Parks and Wildlife staff must make heroic efforts, often using chemicals ironically made from natural gas as a source ingredient, to treat the weeds which have spread into the actual national park area. Whilst the owners and operators of tourist facilities don't deal with the source invasive species on their own property, the PWCNT will have to continue to use chemicals to deal with these weeds. If property owners actually dealt with the problem they have created or helped create - there would be an immediate improvement in this unacceptable situation.

There seems to be a mistaken belief that the existence of the tourist industry is the salvation of the Territory economy, and no-one in that industry has the slightest need to practice what they preach and care for the natural environment. The tourist industry is highly vulnerable to boom and bust – just like mining, and the jobs are generally menial and low-paid.

Their contribution seems limited to selling alcohol, tobacco, cigarettes, gambling products, sugary drinks and take away food, simultaneously accusing the oil and gas industry of potentially causing health effects on people. If it wasn't so breathtakingly hypocritical, it would be funny; you certainly couldn't make it up.

The local Mataranka tourist industry employs almost no local indigenous people. It has had 50 years to transform our economy and improve the wellbeing of local people, but mainly seems to line the pockets of a few business owners who move from interstate, make their money and depart...just like FIFO mining and gas workers, or Lock The Gate activists in turn.

Social Impact Recommendations 12.

Without doubt the most grievous negative social impact of a shale gas – or any other mining or petroleum industry - will be from the impact of directly-paid royalties turning welfare-dependent people living in relative poverty into cash-rich people who are often then engaged in alcohol fuelled violence – hark at what happened in Mataranka just last year (see attached snapshot of feedback on the Mataranka Facebook Noticeboard).

Seismic Recommendations 5.8

The Tennant Creek earthquake in 1988 bent but did not break the Amadeus to Darwin Gas Pipeline which was built in the mid-1980s, so the risk of seismic activity is unlikely to pose any kind of major threat to geologically stable areas like the NT.

Real Time Monitoring Recommendation 9.5

The idea of having real-time on-line reporting from gas wells (or water bores) sounds worthy but is likely to be problematic. Attending Water Meetings in 2016, I noticed those complaining most loudly about water availability had not even bothered to access the online monitoring information already available.

PFAS contamination

I urge the panel to be wary of allowing the current PFAS contamination crisis in Katherine to affect your recommendations. All landholders should be well aware the use of chemicals and contaminants on the surface, if allowed to do so, can leech into the aquifer and affect the groundwater.

However, for the 20+ years PFAS was contaminating the Katherine aquifer, environmental campaigners, local activists and the media fanned a constant stream of scare stories:

- land clearing and agricultural development in the Daly Catchment was accused of causing the silting up of the Daly, wrecking our famous iconic river (research later found it was continued erosion at the headwaters caused by a series of massive wet seasons creating a build-up of sand in parts of the Daly River system)
- Genetically Modified Organisms will destroy life as we know it and must be banned (30 years and still no threat identified, even in the litigious USA)
- Water resources will be over-exploited by broad-scale farming, in particular cotton, and variable water licences will be unable to be enforced and bores and springs will dry up (has never actually happened)
- The European honeybee will wipe out our native bees, causing devastation...
- And on, and on, and on.

Local businesses carried petitions wanting these developments to be banned, and politicians variously set up Committees of Inquiry etc, all to reassure the populace about such threats. In truth, they posed little or no threat at all. Meanwhile, chemicals were leeching into the aquifer, unremarked on and ignored.

Am I the only one to wonder if so many column inches in our newspapers and broadcast hours on our radio stations were not occupied with whining about imaginary threats, there might have been an opportunity for someone – anyone – to think and ask questions about the actual threat?

That is, the said firefighting foam?

The fact the Federal Government blithely allowed it to flow into the aquifer, whilst fuel haulage companies and similar would have been prosecuted for doing the same is a sad irony indeed.

It is also a perfect example of how government is often the least likely to obey its own rules, which it busily inflicts, with a large dose of sanctimony, on others.

In a way it is exactly like the Lock The Gate campaign against hydraulic fracturing – taking all the oxygen from the real environmental concerns which were and have been blindly obvious for years – weeds, soil erosion, fires, feral animals. However, these threats actually require people to put their boots on and DO something about the problems themselves, instead of squawking for the government ban something.

If Weeds regulations that apply to all commercial, lifestyle and residential blocks were actually implemented, in the same draconian way being recommending for oil and gas companies, this would be a great step forward for the natural environment in the NT, because currently many of those complaining about the potential impact of a shale gas industry have themselves severely impacted the natural values of the creeks, rivers, associated riparian areas and the adjacent savannah woodland, but doggedly refused to deal with the problem.

I commented at the meeting that not all people were determinedly opposed to hydraulic fracking and the development of a shale gas industry. The very nature of these meetings, with a visible mob mentality, the shouting down of any alternative view, paid activists whipping people into a frenzy of fear, dubious video footage pre-distributed on DVDs to scare people, has meant most people who were or are neutral or somewhat supportive would not be present. Why would anyone subject themselves to this level of opprobrium, intimidation and vilification?

I sincerely hope the panel's experience of the malevolence, distortions, recalcitrance in the admission of wrong, the constant impugning of motivations of any who disagree, the shouting down of alternative points of view, the fact so many opponents of fracking seem intellectually incapable of understanding the role of the panel versus the role of the oil and gas industry or the role of the government; and the complete inability of many to draw parallels with their own lifestyle and livelihoods, and the damage inflicted on the environment by their own selves, means their concerns should be taken for what they are: induced by the deceptive propaganda of activists, and largely misplaced.

The NT is a tiny jurisdiction with only 240 000 people in 1.3 million km². Almost half the population is seriously disadvantaged, having suffered the consequences of colonisation, and the later roll-out of widespread welfare dependence, over the past 175 years. Those people working and struggling to lead ordinary decent lives have an uphill battle against a system handing out cash which seems primarily to fuel dysfunction. It is clear parts of the NT are close to descending into a dystopian nightmare and recent events in Tennant Creek, once unthinkable, seem a case in point.

The level of regulation in the NT cannot be the same as in southern Australia, simply because we do not have the population and public service necessary to oversee and enforce such regulation. We may be better to harness the regulatory mechanism of another state to frame our regulatory regime, rather than attempt to reinvent the wheel all over again.

I thank the Panel for the work they have done on this inquiry.

The following snapshots illustrate the real social impacts of cash distribution from Royalties.

 **Mataranka Notice Board** October 20, 2017

THUMBS UP to our police and night patrol for curtaining the recent alcohol binge in our community. Despite the mayhem nobody has died. I saw people asleep on roads and verges. Tourists we had camping at Little Roper Stockcamp left because they were scared of the noise and our dogs barking in response. If we got \$10,000 in royalties, we would invest it in our small little business, not in getting pissed and risking another family member being killed for nothing. Just my thoughts.....

42 Reactions 12 Comments

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  and 40 others

 Your thoughts are lovely  2
Like · Reply · 16w

 I'm with Des on this one. Kids asleep all day in classrooms coz community is too loud at night. Thanks to those that gave lunch money but really you should be doing that as a parent anyway- it ain't special. If community invested their money you'd had ... [See More](#)
Like · Reply · 16w  4

 <http://www.katherinetimes.com.au/.../doctors-welcome.../> Will this make any difference? I don't think so. Complete disregard for the law and other innocent road users who could be wiped out through the actions of idiot's who get pissed and drive. C... [See More](#)

 Well said Des!! Nearly every truck driver coming through Mataranka won't stop here at the moment, especially at night time, let alone have a sleep because they wake up in the morning with intoxicated people asleep under and on top of their trailers, ev... [See More](#)
Like · Reply · 16w  5

 The next Security Meeting is to be held late October run by the Police under the banyan tree. I would highly recommend everyone attends so that these issues are recorded in the minutes so they forwarded up the line so our recommendations are implement... [See More](#)
Like · Reply · 16w · Edited  4

 s it possible that these meetings could be held out of normal working hours so more people can attend?
Like · Reply · 16w  2

 agree  1
Like · Reply · 16w

Write a reply...    

 share your frustration  Nothing is going to change in a hurry unless some radical and tough decisions are made.
Like · Reply · 16w  3

 Good thoughts, Des. Just when we thought we were on a roll a couple of weeks ago, having knocked 8 blokes off for the weekend and got them all back by Sunday night ready for work. Then along came royalties and we are back to 3 blokes. And unemployment is blamed for issues in communities??
Like · Reply · 16w   2



Des Barritt Roper Valley 1983 full black stockcamp, 1984 fifty fifty, 1985 full white stockcamp. 1983 two chopper muster crew did not front. 1984 all the aboriginal ringers absconded one night and rolled a car, a tourist found a body (alive) on the road all the adults were laying around drunk. I often talk about Cave Creek employing indigenous people and think it is great, but how can you run a business if staff are not there, you can't!

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Write a reply...



Margie Watson My thoughts for 45 years as a Territorian about the royalties. No accountability and no responsibility. On another note, Tom Curtains new song 'Never Never Land' features the whole Top End even the ocean? No mention of Mataranka or Jeanni Gunn. Has Mataranka lost that title too?

Like · Reply · 16w



Rachael Walters



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