



## HON KEN BASTON MLC

MEMBER FOR MINING AND PASTORAL REGION

14<sup>th</sup> March 2018

### **Submission to the Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation in Western Australia**

I offer this submission to the Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation in Western Australia and my support to allowing hydraulic fracturing to occur in sites in Western Australia. This support is offered on the basis that the businesses involved in the process adhere to all relevant laws and regulations and every effort is made to employ local people, develop training programs and utilise locally based suppliers and contractors.

The unconventional gas industry has been shown to operate very responsibly and without serious incident in Northern Western Australia. I believe the expansion of this industry will lead to a strengthening of the economy, an increase in job opportunities and add momentum to the improvement of transport infrastructure in Northern Western Australia.

I have spoken about this industry in Parliament a number of times and before doing so endeavoured to learn about the process, the potential risks and regulations surrounding fracking. I do not propose to suggest that I'm an expert in the science surrounding this process but I take note of a number of inquiries that have investigated this industry - including the 2015 Public Affairs and Environment Committee report on Implications for Western Australia of Hydraulic Fracturing for Unconventional Gas.

Findings from this report include -

- when horizontal drilling and multi-well pad technology are used during hydraulic fracturing for unconventional gas, the surface footprint of the process is decreased, therefore also minimising the environmental impact of hydraulic fracturing. (Finding 1)
- the likelihood of hydraulic fractures intersecting underground aquifers is negligible. (Finding 29)
- the statement that the development of the unconventional gas industry in Western Australia will result in thousands of wells in the Kimberley and the Midwest has been over-stated and is not based on evidence (Finding 35)

I also note recommendation 12 and wholly agree that 'any future consideration of hydraulic fracturing for unconventional gas in Western Australia be based on established facts, ascertained through baseline data and monitoring, with a view to strengthening the industry's social licence to operate.'

There has been a considerable campaign against this industry from some groups who use questionable sources and on some occasions disseminate demonstrably inaccurate information. This has lead to some people within the community feeling very concerned about the activities of this industry.

I have every confidence this inquiry will come to it's findings and recommendations based on established facts and the industries positive record of operation up until the announcement of the moratorium. I hope this inquiry will help provide more clarity on areas of concern and will go a long way towards alleviating these concerns within the community.

If this inquiry finds this process to be safe and within an acceptable level of risk this then this industry should be allowed to develop so that the community can benefit from increased economic activity and a growth in services this can bring.

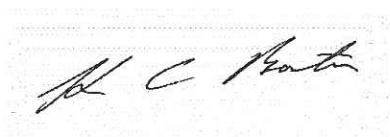
The potential for this industry to improve employment outcomes, especially in the Kimberley, is immense. For example, Buru Energy fracked two wells near Noonkanbah community in 2015. This program employed 33 local people for over 13,500 work hours, with Noonkanbah people involved in all aspects of the operation such as civil works, security, camp support and trades.<sup>1</sup>

Should this industry expand, so too will the training, employment and downstream economic opportunities. The Kimberley, and Broome in particular, is heavily reliant on the tourism industry and government services as a source of employment. Allowing the development of the unconventional gas industry will help diversify the region's economy and create demand for a variety of skills and trades.

I am in no doubt that this industry and tourism can co-exist. The places where facing has occurred and could possibly occur in the future have no great tourism value and it is unlikely these two industries will interact aside from creating demand for accommodation, hospitality and possible event sponsorship opportunities.

Partnerships between the companies involved in this industry and local events such as Shinju Matsuri<sup>2</sup> have occurred in the past and these revenue streams are often essential to community events proceeding.

For the reasons mentioned above I wish to convey my support for lifting the moratorium on hydraulic fracturing Western Australia. I am confident in the level of regulation surrounding this industry. -I am also confident in the ability of the government to enforce the 22 different pieces of legislation and their associated regulations that interact with this industry. I look forward to the findings and recommendations of this inquiry.



Hon Ken Baston MLC

Member for the Mining and Pastoral Region

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<sup>1</sup> Buru Energy TGS Factsheet: Training, Employment, and Contracting

<sup>2</sup> Buru Energy supported the 2016 Shinju Matsuri Art Prize  
<https://www.buruenergy.com/shinju-matsuri-festival-pearl/>