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Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry

By Email: [info@frackinginquiry.wa.gov.au](mailto:info@frackinginquiry.wa.gov.au)

14<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Dear Panel Members,

As a retired businessman, I have had the opportunity to read and listen widely about the impacts and risks of fracking. The parallels between the industry in the USA and our own geological conditions and gas beds are large, being shale and tight gas. Therefore a new report by medical doctors resonates strongly with me, especially as it corroborates so strongly the views of Doctors for the Environment in Australia.

Concerned Health Professionals of New York and Physicians for Social Responsibility in the US have today 14<sup>th</sup> March 2018 released the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of their Compendium on the risks and harms of fracking. (<http://www.psr.org/assets/pdfs/fracking-compendium-5.pdf>).

The conclusion is unambiguous: "All together, findings to date from scientific, medical, and journalistic investigations combine to demonstrate that fracking poses significant threats to air, water, health, public safety, climate stability, seismic stability, community cohesion, and long-term economic vitality. Emerging data from a rapidly expanding body of evidence continue to reveal a plethora of recurring problems and harms that cannot be sufficiently averted through regulatory frameworks. There is no evidence that fracking can operate without threatening public health directly or without imperilling climate stability upon which public health depends.

In the words of investigative journalist Andrew Nikiforuk: "Industry swore that its cracking rock technology was safe and proven, but science now tells a different story. Brute force combined with ignorance ... has authored thousands of earthquakes ... [and] called forth clouds of migrating methane.... The science is complicated but clear: cracking rock with fluids is a chaotic activity and no computer model can predict where those fractures will go. The regulatory record shows that they often go out of zone; extend into water; and rattle existing oil and gas wells, and these rattled wells are leaking more methane."

"Fracking profits go to private industry but the public—families and communities—bear the costs of the many health complications from the drilling.

There is growing evidence of a variety of health problems being associated with fracking. Common sense dictates that drinking and breathing cancer-causing agents will take their toll. The correlation is too strong to ignore, especially when we have other, cleaner energy options. For our safety and that of future generations, we should not allow the new administration to sell off public lands, nor allow drilling on our land, and should ban fracking completely".

These are views of medical scientists. They are my views entirely, and add to the evidence i presented at your recent hearing in Perth. That evidence was that the commercial risks of fracking are large, and growing, as evidenced by long-term gas prices and fracking company share prices alike, for instance. In a world post the Paris agreement, where there is a growing action plan to reduce our fossil-fuel consumption world-wide, there is little sense in opening up new fossil-fuel exploration provinces in WA. It is one thing for commercial companies to lose their shareholder funds, but it is quite another for a state to invest in a risky new industry. Even if funds are not invested directly, there is a high risk that failed enterprises could leave the state burdened with clean-up bills, contaminated water - whether underground or surface - and the growing effects of climate change in an already-drying macro climate. (Although i accept that "commercial risk" may be outside the scope of this enquiry, i put it to you that commerce and economics are viewed by many as a science, and in any event do drive most, if not all, the decisions we make in our society today).

The latest report from the doctors now adds a huge new risk to regulators and our government: that of the power of the legal system. Just like smokers could sue the tobacco companies for health damage and cost the health system billions, so regular citizens impacted by fracking could sue regulators and proponents for the (known and published) effects of fracking activities. As a concerned citizen, i hope this never happens.

We have managed to live our lives for hundreds of years in this country without the need to frack it. So the real question to be asked actually is "why should we commence fracking now?" Do we really have a need? Do we have a shortage of energy in this state? Not according to AEMO, which predicts a surplus of electricity in the next decade!

When we know that the legacies of fracking with unknown new technologies could linger irreversibly in our precious environment for decades, if not centuries, surely the logical conclusion is to avoid the risks? Especially when, as a conscious state, we could do so much more to promote other industries with minimal risks, including regenerative farming, eco-tourism, indigenous history food and engagement and of course renewable energy?

Therefore, I call on the Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry to recommend a permanent, legislated ban on fracking and unconventional gas activities across WA, and to recommend the development of alternative resources to meet the state's energy and economic needs.

Yours sincerely,

Norman Pater

Company Director