

Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry  
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## **WA Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation in Western Australia 2018**

### **Science Ethics**

The West Kimberley is a world class asset, a vast largely unspoilt wilderness, with a huge inventory of rare and exotic birds, reptiles, fish, insects and marsupials as well as a rich and diverse plant kingdom. Plants that are used for pharmacology, food, housing, baskets and string. A great deal of the land is recognised as having the most ancient and legitimate claim to management responsibility recognised in law, yet there is constant bullying and trickery from governments in support of private industry to exclude or marginalise genuine representative Indigenous views.

It is time for the government to have a serious reflection on the way all rights and interests are appropriately represented in determining the scientific ethics defining the parameters of the project. It is insufficient for state governments to continue to act as if the *Federal Native Title Act (1993)* did not exist. The WA Government should be taking the lead to demonstrate how a genuine cooperative and collaborative community partnership can be forged.

No should be a genuine option for everyone. There can be no justifiable reason why it is considered reasonable to exclude the Perth metropolitan, Peel and South-West regions because fracking is too dangerous and at the same time be considering exposing others to it. Surely the scientific community is not prepared to allow the experimental exposure of the most innocent people to eternal poisoning for benefiting international investors. If you truly believe it is safe then frack Perth, Peel and the South West.

The terms of reference of the scientific inquiry are unscientific because they are created around a political context; principally don't frack where most of the white folk are. The structure of the inquiry is loaded to getting an outcome that allows for the people in the south-west to poison others throughout WA and that is not unacceptable.

The inquiry is further reduced to a political snow job when you start to talk about regulatory mechanisms that may be employed to mitigate or minimise risks to an acceptable level. Why is it acceptable to poison people and the environment in more remote areas than it is to poison people in the city and south-west? Scientists don't know these answers, the West Kimberley is a very fragile, very complex network of subsurface water systems that nobody has the right to decide to put at risk.

The only thing we know for certain about the process of hydraulic fracturing is at some point 'every frack well will fail'. And somebody at some point in the future will have to deal with it. The only responsible way to manage fracking is to not permit it.

I am shocked that the government is prepared to value some people's health and environment over others. The fact that the government is prepared to consider exposing some people to levels of risk that they are not prepared to expose their supporters too is inappropriate.

Throughout this contest for the future of the Kimberley the critical element must be grounded in the truth. There are many possibilities for sustainably harnessing the economic bounty of the north. It wasn't long ago the mantra was 'don't repeat the mistakes of the south' when developing the north. The current planning tool appears to be industry driven. State and Federal governments maintain policies and processes that further maintain uncertainty that bias developers.

I do not have confidence in the Government's capacity to mitigate the impact of a mine or a frack well on the Kimberley. I don't want to sound too cynical however it appears the current fracking inquiry results look predetermined. It seems the study will say fracking is dangerous that is why the government is mitigating the potential damage by containing fracking to remote northern and eastern regions where there is less people (much higher proportion who are Aboriginal) with less established industries. The land is a resource for the people who live there. Managing the land is the industry they are involved in. It is time to open a genuine planning process and start to include Aboriginal people with a genuine interest in negotiating partnerships in the spirit of true recognition of Native Title.

There is a whole world of science and lived experience out there that clearly unequivocally determine that fracking is dangerous. State governments around our country are banning fracking because it is universally acknowledged as a dangerous practice. The challenge I have with what looks to come out of this Government investigation into fracking will be the juxtaposition of the justification that it is too dangerous to frack in the south west where large populations and established agriculture, vineyards and olive groves thrive yet in the north where the people are fewer and the bush supports a valuable ecosystem we are valued far less. This is a racist approach to policy creation and implementation.

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