

Dear Inquiry Panel,

I am a Kimberley local, born in Broome, and have lived here for the majority of my life – and I am supportive of the unconventional oil and gas industry in this region. I am confident that the industry, which will utilise hydraulic fracture stimulation, will have a positive impact on the community.

The establishment of onshore oil and gas will bring substantial benefits to the region. The Kimberley is faced with significant issues including a high unemployment rate and numerous social challenges. In addition, the local economy is in need of a more constant input, to supplement the 4-month tourism season, to stimulate growth. The increasing amount of empty retail shops, offices available for lease and closed local small businesses is evidence of this in Broome. These issues highlight the need for job creation, employment and economic stimulation.

Science

Hydraulic fracture stimulation has been demonstrated to pose a minimal risk to the environment and people. This was shown in multiple inquiries, including the 2015 Western Australian Parliamentary Inquiry. The inquiry found there were sufficient safeguards to protect drinking water, including adequate procedures to mitigate any negative environmental impacts if they do occur. The inquiry found that water contamination is unlikely and stated that the chemicals found in the frac fluid are heavily diluted (0.5%). More over, the Australian Council of Learned Academies' 2013 report found that shale gas extraction causes no greater risk than conventional gas, given appropriate safeguards are implemented. A local independent review of hydraulic fracture stimulation, commissioned by Nyamba Buru Yawuru on Buru Energy's project in the Canning Basin, came to similar conclusions. The review found that the risks were limited and the controls proposed by the company were sufficient.

Buru Energy has conducted hydraulic fracturing on 3 wells in the Kimberley since 2010. Which is accompanied by over 600 fractured wells in Western Australia, 13 of which occurred in the Canning Basin since 1958. Buru Energy's ongoing water monitoring of their 3 sites has indicated there is no water contamination.

Regulatory Framework

The robust regulations enforced on the industry ensure that the potential risks are mitigated. The government employs a strict regulatory framework, requiring transparency of companies (e.g. publicly disclosing all chemicals), imposing international engineering standards (including minimum well barrier requirements), and extensive impact assessments. These regulations are only a small sample of the regulatory requirements companies must meet to allow them to function.

Community Impacts

The above ground impacts to the local community from the proposed projects in the Canning Basin are minimal. Given the remoteness of the sites on pastoral leases, there would be no impact to tourism in the region, nor would the local community be affected. The impact on pastoralists would also be minimal, due to the size of their lease, and would most likely benefit from improved access and bores. Modern onshore pads are home to multiple wells (up to 8) and therefore would decrease the amount of area

disturbed to access the source rock deposit. Thus ecological impacts, such as loss of habitat, edge effects and fragmentation, are also reduced.

As mentioned previously, the Kimberley is in need of job creation, employment and economic stimulation. Oil and gas companies operating onshore would assist in this department. Such companies would pay royalties to the government that will be reinvested in the state and region. Furthermore, money will be spent directly in the town via the purchasing of goods, employment of local skilled labour and the use of businesses and contractors. The need for a more constant input into the economy was also mentioned, as tourism only provides a short boost, leaving local businesses to struggle for 8 months of the year. Western Australia is also facing a tourism downturn, adding to the struggle of the tourism dependant town. Diversification of the towns industries would not only increase monetary input, it would contribute to making a more robust economy, as relying on a single sector at present contributes to economic volatility.

Given the above information and the supplementary readings provided by the fracking inquiry website, I am confident that the unconventional oil and gas industry can function safely. The highly regulated and monitored industry, operating under close scrutiny and transparency, has sufficient safeguards in place to mitigate potential effects and minimise the associated risks. Consequently, unconventional gas will provide an overall benefit to the region and its communities.

Sincerely
Alistair Winrow