

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr. Higgins to the Chief Minister:

Fracking Inquiry

1. What were the criteria for selection of all panel members?

Panel members were selected on the grounds that they had expertise in an area of science relevant to the Terms of Reference, such as hydrogeology, geochemistry, water chemistry, human health, environmental regulation, the onshore oil and gas industry, sociology and social impact assessments.

2. Why were only two Territory 'experts' selected for the Panel of Inquiry?

Highly regarded scientists from all over Australia were considered, to ensure the highest level of scientific expertise on the panel. In addition to the two Northern Territory based experts, four of the other panel members have significant experience in the Northern Territory, including that they have held positions in the Northern Territory or worked closely on Northern Territory based projects.

3. How many times do you expect the panel formed to inquire into hydraulic fracturing will meet between the first scheduled meeting on December 8 and the final release of its report?

The panel will meet as required during the course of the Inquiry. The panel meetings will be in addition to community hearings and consultations, which will commence in March 2017.

4. Where will these meetings take place?

Meetings of the panel will be held in the Northern Territory and interstate, where required.

5. Will panel members be expected to attend meetings or will they be permitted to participate via conference call?

Panel members will be expected to attend meetings in person. Video conferencing will be arranged for members who cannot attend due to prior commitments.

6. How will they accumulate information to contribute to the inquiry?

A secretariat function will be provided by the Hydraulic Fracturing Taskforce in the Department of the Chief Minister.

- 7. Will the report of the Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the NT conducted by Dr Allan Hawke AC in 2014-15 be considered by the Panel of Inquiry?**

Yes.

- 8. What is the budgeted cost of the inquiry?**

The Inquiry's allocated budget for 2016-17 financial year is \$3.05 million.

- 9. What is Justice Rachel Pepper's full remuneration for chairing the inquiry – including sitting fees, travel, accommodation and other payments?**

The Honourable Justice Rachel Pepper will be remunerated \$407,571 per annum from her commencement as Chair of the Inquiry, paid fortnightly. Justice Pepper has taken a leave of absence from the New South Wales Land and Environment Court for the Inquiry.

All travel and accommodation expenses are covered by the NT Government's budget allocation for the Inquiry.

- 10. What will each individual panel member be remunerated – including sitting fees, travel, accommodation and other payments for participating in the inquiry?**

The panel members are remunerated in accordance with the provisions of the *Assembly Members and Statutory Officers (Remuneration and Other Entitlements) Act*. Members are paid a daily rate, which applies when the panel members are travelling and working on Inquiry business. The daily rate for panel members ranges from \$1000 to \$1750. One panel member also receives a payment of \$0.76 per kilometre for use of their personal vehicle specifically from their primary place of residence to the airport (and return) when airline travel is required as part of approved Inquiry business.

All travel and accommodation expenses are covered by the NT Government's budget allocation for the Inquiry.

- 11. When will the Inquiry be finalised?**

The Chair of the Inquiry has forecast the final report will be completed and provided to government by the year's end, following consultation across the Northern Territory.

- 12. When will the interim report be available?**

The panel has announced the interim report will be released mid 2017. The panel has forecast an Issues Paper will be released in late February 2017 for community consultation.

- 13. Will both the interim and final reports be made public in full?**

Yes.