

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Guyula to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Security:

Fracking and Water Security

1. Recommendation 9.8 of the Pepper Inquiry states that the Government seeks to ensure there is no net increase in the life cycle emissions associated with onshore gas produced in the NT. This includes emissions created using NT gas interstate.

In light of the recent change of Federal Government, what is the Minister's plan to ensure recommendation 9.8 is implemented and there will be no net increase in life cycle emissions associated with NT onshore gas?

Answer:

Since it accepted the recommendations of the *Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory* (the Inquiry), the Northern Territory Government (NTG) has adopted a goal of a sustainable and diverse \$40 billion economy by 2030, and committed to a target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The NTG also remains committed to a target of 50% renewable energy by 2030. These commitments frame the Northern Territory's (NT) approach to growing and decarbonising the economy.

The NTG has taken significant action to implement recommendation 9.8 within its sphere of control. Progress in implementing recommendation 9.8 is reported on the Hydraulic Fracturing NT website: www.hydraulicfracturing.nt.gov.au/action-items/9.8.

The NTG negotiated an Energy and Emissions Bilateral Agreement with the former Australian Government prior to the 2022 election. The Bilateral Agreement establishes a 10 year partnership with the Australian Government to support investments in key emissions reduction projects, to secure, clean, reliable energy across the NT and advance low emissions initiatives.

The Bilateral Agreement also demonstrates a shared commitment to addressing emissions from the onshore gas industry and implementing recommendation 9.8.

The NTG is working to progress action under the Bilateral Agreement with the current Australian Government.

2. NT environmental organisations outline that 40% of the recommendations from the Fracking Inquiry, which the NT Government state are complete, have not been implemented in accordance with the Inquiry.

Will you commission an independent review to assess whether or not the implementation of the recommendations of the Fracking Inquiry have been properly implemented?

Answer:

The NTG is committed to implementing all of the recommendations of the Inquiry and is progressing implementation of the recommendations accordingly.

The NTG does not agree with the analysis undertaken by an American based Non-Government Organisation on behalf of environment groups (Environment Defenders Office and Lock the Gate Alliance) on the status of implementation of Inquiry recommendations and is transparently reporting on progress through a dedicated website: www.hydraulicfracturing.nt.gov.au that is updated regularly.

Independent review of the implementation of Inquiry recommendations is already occurring. To increase transparency and accountability, the NTG appointed Dr David Ritchie to the role of Independent Overseer. The role of the Independent Overseer is to provide the Chief Minister and NTG with independent advice on how implementation of the recommendations from the Inquiry is being progressed and managed.

Dr Ritchie's independent advice to the NTG is published at: www.hydraulicfracturing.nt.gov.au/about/governance/independent-oversight.

3. This budget commits \$18 million to water resources. What money from that will be used to ensure traditional owners, elders, leaders and community members are consulted prior to major decisions regarding water management, such as water licenses being granted, are made?

Answer:

The Water Resources Division of the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security has a 2022-23 budget of \$18.102M, this covers a range of activities including drilling, water monitoring, water assessment and modelling, planning and engagement, and licensing and regulation.

The budget for consultation across the community on water management is largely coordinated through the operational activities of the Planning and Engagement Branch which is responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of water allocation plans.

The Planning and Engagement Branch has a budget of approximately \$1.1M. Approximately \$150 000 is spent directly on engagement with Traditional Owner groups and around \$200 000 supports water advisory committees.

Through the licencing assessment process, individual notices of intention to make a water extraction licence decision are advertised and provided to land owners and occupiers adjacent to the land on which the water will be taken and/or used. The Licencing and Regulation Branch provide this notice to land councils who identify and work with the affected Aboriginal parties to make a submission on any proposed water extraction licence application.

The Department's 'Building the base' program will provide an additional \$514 000 to map and identify Aboriginal artefacts in the landscape on which traditional Aboriginal cultural water values depend through policy development and the establishment of Aboriginal reference groups in water allocation plan areas.