Hawke Report released

26 February 2015

The Hawke Report into hydraulic fracturing has been tabled in Parliament and the public will now have an opportunity to provide feedback on its findings.

“I’d like to thank Dr Hawke for his Report which follows extensive consultation with the community, interested stakeholders and consideration of reports, knowledge and industry practices from interstate and overseas,” Minister for Mines and Energy Dave Tollner said.

“The Inquiry aimed to separate the actual environmental risks from the perceived risks and clear up some of the claims about fracking that have caused significant public concern.”

More than 250 submissions were received.

“The Territory Government sees onshore gas exploration as providing significant economic benefits but we also recognise that Territorians will not accept trade-offs when it comes to the environment and protecting our treasured lifestyle,” Mr Tollner said.

The Government broadly accepts all of the six recommendations in the report.

“The key finding is that fracking can take place safely in the Northern Territory, provided the appropriate regulatory and monitoring regime is in place to allay community concern,” Minister Tollner said.

“We want to now work with Territorians in developing the best possible regulatory regime that is in line with community expectations.

“As such, I have asked Dr Allan Hawke to stay on to lead a review of the regulatory regime, engaging with the community and key stakeholders to develop a best practice framework.

“In the meantime, we are confident that with only 24 wells due to be drilled in the Territory this year, onshore exploration activity can be safely managed through existing legislation in conjunction with a new set of guiding principles. These guiding principles clearly set out how the industry should conduct itself for all onshore oil and gas exploration in the Territory.”

These draft guiding principles are being released today for public comment.
They cover land access, well design, construction and operation, water management, air and noise emissions, community and social impacts, chemical and waste handling and management, rehabilitation and decommissioning and local content.

“Key among these is a proposal to establish exclusion zones over major towns preventing fracturing near these population centres. We’ll be seeking feedback on where these boundaries should be drawn,” Mr Tollner said.

“The community, stakeholders and industry will have an opportunity to be involved in finalising the guiding principles and in all stages of the development of a robust regulatory model.”

The report makes it clear that the industry needs to earn its ‘social licence’ from the community by building trust, operating transparently, responding to community concerns and talking to people on the land.

“Compliance with these guiding principles, once they are finalised, will be central to keeping this social licence,” Mr Tollner said.

The Territory Government is working closely with the Commonwealth to ensure oversight of activities is aligned with national best practice with respect to water. The Territory is also investigating accessing the expertise of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee that currently plays a similar role with respect to Coal Seam Gas in NSW and Queensland.

Further funding will also be provided to the Department of Land Resource Management and the Department of Mines and Energy for their ecology, hydrology and geology programs to develop baseline data for the McArthur River Basin (including Beetaloo) and the Amadeus Basin.

The report is available for download and comment from the Inquiry website

www.hyraulicfracturinginquiry.nt.gov.au

Please see recommendations attached.

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Hawke Inquiry - Recommendations -.pdf