Delivering on our Fracking Moratorium election commitment

14 September 2016

Chief Minister Michael Gunner today delivered on a key election commitment by announcing a moratorium and independent scientific inquiry into fracking in the Northern Territory.

The moratorium is in effect as of today, and the Minister will not approve the process of hydraulic fracturing across the entire Northern Territory.

“T’im getting on with the job of delivering on our election commitments.” Mr Gunner said.

“Territory Labor was clear about our policy of a moratorium on fracking and the election result is a clear mandate to implement it.

“We heard loud and clear the concerns of everyday Territorians, pastoralists, amateur and commercial fishermen, tourism operators, traditional owners, Indigenous rangers and environmental groups.

“It’s clear that Territorians are concerned about the effects of fracking on our land, water and environment. My government is acting on those concerns.”

Territory Labor’s fracking moratorium:

- Is Territory-wide. Fracking will not be approved across the entire Northern Territory.
- Applies to hydraulic fracturing of unconventional reservoirs, as well as the use of Diagnostic Fracture Injection Testing (DFIT)
- Applies to hydraulic fracturing under any permit or licence. This means fracking will not be approved whether it is for exploration or extraction.
- Is prospective, not retrospective. The moratorium does not apply to existing approvals, of which there is only one remaining case, of which the fracking component is now finished.

As part of the moratorium, a thorough investigation into the effects of fracking will take place.

This investigation will be undertaken by an expert panel, with expertise in geology, ecology, hydrogeology, ecotoxicology, geochemistry and environmental regulation.
At the conclusion of this investigation, the panel will provide its expert opinion as to whether the practice of fracking can be safely conducted in a highly regulated environment or whether it is deemed too great a risk for the Territory environment.

Draft Terms of Reference for the fracking inquiry have also been released today, which will be open for public comment for four weeks.

The terms of reference are available and public comment can be made at https://nt.gov.au/frackinginquiry

Public consultation sessions and meetings will be held in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and other regional communities, ensuring the collective voice of the community is heard.

A Hydraulic Fracturing Taskforce will also be set up in the Department of the Chief Minister to support the Inquiry panel and its public consultations, and to report regularly to Cabinet.

“Public consultation is absolutely key to this moratorium’s success. I promised an open and consultative government and I want all Territorians to have their say on this issue.” Mr Gunner said.

The Moratorium on hydraulic fracturing of onshore unconventional reservoirs within the Northern Territory will remain in place until government has thoroughly considered the recommendations of the Inquiry.

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