

The facts about Beetaloo



Scientific studies and inquiries support safe, onshore development

- The Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO, Geoscience Australia and the Department of Agriculture Water and the Environment looked at surface water, groundwater and the environment and found that “with high confidence”, “the majority of pathways have low to very low potential” for impact and that “potential impacts ... can be mitigated through ongoing compliance with existing regulatory and management controls” (*Huddleston-Holmes CR et al., 2021*).
- The NT Pepper inquiry took 15 months, received 1,250 submissions, held 151 public hearings and 52 community forums. It found that risks can be “mitigated or reduced – and in some cases eliminated altogether” to acceptable levels” when its recommendations are implemented (*Justice Pepper, 2018*).
- The inquiry found that “...not only should the risks associated with an onshore shale gas industry be minimised to an acceptable level, in some instances, they can be avoided altogether” (*Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory, 2018*).
- 13 other inquiries and reviews have found risks of hydraulic fracturing can be managed safely, as well as the former Chief Scientist (*Dr Alan Finkel, 2015*) and the Australian Council of Learned Academies (*Australian Council of Learned Academies, 2013*).



Traditional owners are being consulted

- Companies cannot explore for oil and gas until they have an agreement with Native Title Holders.
- 15 Land Access agreements have been signed since 2003 in the Beetaloo basin.
- Consultation has been ongoing for almost 20 years.
- The Northern Land Council – the representative body under law - has confirmed that no traditional owners have been excluded from consultation or decision making (*Northern Land Council, Response to Submission 18 to the Senate Inquiry into Oil and Gas Exploration and Production in the Beetaloo Basin, 2021*).
- The Northern Land Council has confirmed that consultation has been extensive and that title holders have received information about activities proposed to take place on their land (*ibid*).
- Aboriginal heritage, traditions and sacred sites are protected by two Commonwealth Acts, the Native Title Act and the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, with complementary Northern Territory legislation, the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989 (NT) (Sacred Sites Act) as well as the Environmental Assessment Act 1982 (NT) and the Heritage Act (*Final report of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory, 2018*).

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Onshore gas can and does coexist with pastoralist activities

- Companies cannot explore for oil and gas until they have an agreement with land holders (APPEA, 2020).
- The NT Cattleman's Association has endorsed new Petroleum Regulations which contain 24 minimum provisions for land access (*ibid*).
- The gas industry has been operating onshore for more than 50 years.



No production will occur before strict regulations are in place and approvals are granted

- Production applications cannot be granted until the Pepper inquiry recommendations are implemented in full.
- No production can proceed without the implementation of all Pepper inquiry recommendations, landowner and native title holder consent and compliance with more than 20 regulations and pieces of legislation.
- These include the NT Water Act, Petroleum Act, Petroleum Environment Regulations, including the Code of Practice: onshore petroleum activities NT, the Environmental and Biodiversity Conservation Act, Land Rights Act, Sacred Sites Act and the Native Title Act.

REFERENCES:

APPEA (2020). APPEA and NTCA welcome new land access regulations

Australian Council of Learned Academies (2013). Engineering Energy: Unconventional Gas Production, A study of shale gas in Australia

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<https://energyinformationaustralia.com.au/research/australias-significant-investment-into-understanding-onshore-drilling-and-hydraulic-fracturing/>

Huddleston-Holmes CR et al. (2021). Impact Assessment for the Beetaloo GBA Region. Geological and Bioregional Assessment Program: Stage 3 Synthesis. Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO and Geoscience Australia, Australia

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