



EMPIRE ENERGY GROUP LIMITED

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26 July 2021

Committee Secretary  
Senate Environment and Communications References Committee  
Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

**Inquiry into oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin**

**Misrepresentation by Ms Rikki Tanika Dank**

Thank you for the opportunity to correct false and misleading statements contained in a submission to the inquiry into oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin currently being undertaken by the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee.

As part of this inquiry, the committee has received a submission from Ms Rikki Tanika Dank which makes demonstrably untrue claims against Empire Energy Group Limited.

Ms Dank states she is a traditional owner of the land where Empire Energy's subsidiary company, Imperial Oil & Gas Pty Limited is undertaking gas exploration activities. She claims she and her family have been excluded from consent negotiations in relation to those activities.

It is important to note that it is not Empire's role to determine who are legitimate traditional owners of the land where we seek to operate, or to determine who attends any on-country meetings in relation to those operations. That responsibility resides with the Northern Land Council, as does conducting the process to obtain consent or otherwise of our applications.

I was disappointed to read Ms Dank's claim that since 2018 she and her grandmothers Katie Baker and Peggy Mawson "have heard nothing from either Empire or the NLC regarding this matter, yet it has progressed to the point of the drilling of an initial well. At no stage has Empire made any attempts to reach out to our family to attempt to seek out our concerns and involve us in the discussion process."

This is demonstrably untrue.

While we regard our relationships with individual members of the community as confidential, when false claims are made about those relationships, we must correct the record.

As recently as May this year, I made direct email contact with Ms Dank offering to meet after she made a submission to the Northern Territory Government objecting to our proposed work programs. In the polite email exchange which followed, I made clear my personal availability to meet Ms Dank at her convenience. On 21 May I wrote:

- This is a very important discussion so I will move any other meetings I have currently scheduled to ensure that we can find a time that works for you and your family.

It was thus surprising and disappointing to read her claim that “at no stage has made any attempts to reach out to our family.”

I have attached a copy of that email correspondence, with personal details redacted (see Attachment A).

It is also appropriate to note that the Northern Land Council advised us in an email dated 15 December last year that Ms Dank’s grandmother Peggy Mawson did attend a meeting to discuss our Work Program on Exploration Permit 187 and was one of four traditional owners who nominated herself as an artist interested in recording our activity.

Genuine and respectful engagement is central to our relations with traditional owners and other Aboriginal Territorians.

As part of that respectful engagement, we would not normally disclose communications with individual community members, but when such engagement is denied or misrepresented, we do believe it is important to correct the public record.

We ask that this correction be made to the public record of your proceedings.

Thank you for this opportunity to ensure that Senate Environment and Communications References Committee is properly informed and to assist the Committee with its deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

**Alex Underwood**  
**Managing Director**

**ATTACHMENT A: Email correspondence between Alex Underwood and Ms Rikki Dank**

----- Original message -----

From: [REDACTED]

Date: 5/17/21 4:46 AM (GMT+04:00)

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Empire Energy

Dear Ms Dank,

I am the Managing Director of Empire Energy, the parent company of Imperial Oil & Gas Pty Limited.

I understand that you have concerns regarding our company's onshore gas exploration activities.

I would welcome the opportunity to speak to you to listen to your concerns.

Please let me know whether you would like to speak. If so, please let me know how best to contact you and what date and time you would prefer to talk.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Underwood.



Empire Energy Group Limited

Level 19, 20 Bond Street Sydney NSW 2000

Phone: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 20 May 2021 3:37 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Empire Energy

Hi Alex,

Apologies for my delayed reply.

Thank you for your offer to discuss our concerns.

I have just been consulting my family on how they would like to participate in this discussion and their availability to join a group call with yourself.

I will get back to you soon and thank you for your patience.

Kind regards,

Rikki.

Sent from my Galaxy

----- Original message -----

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Date:** 5/21/21 3:12 AM (GMT+04:00)  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Empire Energy

Hi Rikki,

Thank you for your email.

I look forward to speaking.

This is a very important discussion so I will move any other meetings I have currently scheduled to ensure that we can find a time that works for you and your family.

The only meetings I have coming up in the next week that I can't move are next Thursday from 10am to 4pm and next Friday before 11.30am but other than those times I will work to your schedule.

Kind regards,

Alex.



Empire Energy Group Limited

Level 19, 20 Bond Street Sydney NSW 2000

Phone: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Thursday, 27 May 2021 4:37 PM

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Empire Energy

Hi Alex,

Thank you for your patience,

we were hoping to have the meeting via Zoom on the 1st of June 2pm Est.

Kind regards Rikki

Sent from my Galaxy

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 27 May 2021 4:48 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Empire Energy

Hi Rikki,

Unfortunately I'll be fully occupied all day on 1 June. Would it be possible to meet at the same time on the day before? Or the same time on Thursday 4th or any time on Friday 5th?

Many thanks,

Alex.



Empire Energy Group Limited

Level 19, 20 Bond Street Sydney NSW 2000

Phone: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED]

**ENDS: No further response received.**