

21 March 2022

Senator Sam McMahon
Senator for the Northern Territory
PO Box 40021
Casuarina NT 0811

Email: senator.mcmahon@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator McMahon,

I am writing to you in support of oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin.

The Darwin Major Business Group represents 15 major non-resources/pastoral businesses that employ over 4,000 people. Our members comprise:

AirNorth
GPT Group
Darwin Convention Centre
Dixon Group
CGH Group
Halikos
HB Group

Hannon Group
Margetic Sitzler
Mindil Beach Casino Resort
NT Airports
One Rail Australia
Paspaley
Porusus Pty Ltd
Trepang Services Pty Ltd

Collectively our members have a record of significant investment, and our future sustainability and success is strongly linked to the performance of the Darwin and wider Northern Territory economies.

Developing the substantial gas resources in the Beetaloo Basin could create thousands of local jobs for Territorians and not only boost individuals' incomes and increase royalty payments to government; it will also have positive flow-on effects for our member businesses who in turn contribute to the overall economy. Economic growth for the Northern Territory at this time in our history is a significant priority as is the flow-on effects to a wide range of businesses in the NT and improving the lives of ordinary Territorians.

Businesses like ours depend on major projects. Exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin will give our members the certainty needed to keep people employed, grow our businesses, and reinvest in the Territory.

As a group of employers, we recognise an important element of unlocking the Beetaloo Basin is the commitment to work with stakeholders in the Barkly region to identify how increased gas activity in the area can drive economic benefits for Aboriginal people in both the region and wider Northern Territory.

The gas industry and its contractors have a demonstrated track record of safe, sustainable operations throughout Australia, and as a Group we are concerned that politicians are being influenced by misinformation about onshore development.

It's important to note that an expert panel of eight scientists, chaired by the Hon. Justice Rachel Pepper, undertook an independent scientific inquiry into the practice of hydraulic fracturing in the Northern Territory and found that any risks could be mitigated or reduced to acceptable levels. The Darwin Major Business Group made a submission on the Draft Final Report of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory on the 18 January 2018, and we stand by our submission and have attached a copy for your information. As outlined in our submission to the Inquiry, "Big picture" aspects of the Draft Report which stand out to the Darwin Major Business group are:


- technical and environmental risks are low to very low in modern shale gas hydraulic fracturing good practice;
- the small footprint and muted terrain impact of production wells means the industry can happily co-exist with tourism, pastoral properties and communities;
- the projected economic benefits of a shale gas industry in the Territory are significant;
- land access arrangements are manageable. They provide tangible benefits and work program input to Aboriginal traditional owners and potential income diversity for pastoralists; and
- the Inquiry's conservative approach to risk management and social impact assessment plus wide consultation with Territorians would satisfy the toughest critics."

As stated in our 2018 submission we continue to believe the assumptions underpinning the ACIL ALLEN assessment of economic benefits of a shale gas industry are conservative. We state again, and I highlight, **this industry is hugely important to the Territory which has a narrow economic base and is facing real economic, social and Government revenue challenges.** While we made this statement four years ago, it is even more important today.

Exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin could provide great benefits to businesses like ours, drive the Territory's economy, and be conducted safely and sustainably for years to come.

On behalf of the Darwin Major Business Group, I urge you to support oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin.

Yours sincerely,

 Michael Hannon AM
Chairman
Darwin Major Business Group