



THE SENATE

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

22 October 2021

The Hon Angus Taylor MP
Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Taylor

Oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin

Thank you for your letter dated 21 October 2021.

In considering your response, the committee notes that some of its questions were not fully answered. To be clear, the committee requests that you address each of the following questions separately and in turn:

1. With reference to FOI Disclosure Log 21-013-68011m, Document 3 (attached):
 - A. Can you please advise the committee when, where and how this discussion occurred, who was present and what aspects of the grant program were discussed?
 - B. Did you or your office refer Empire Energy, its subsidiaries or any of its staff to Minister Pitt's office as requested?
 - C. Can you confirm that there has been no correspondence between you and Empire Energy or its subsidiaries discussing the Beetaloo Cooperative Drilling program?
 - D. Has there been any other correspondence between your office and Empire Energy or its subsidiaries discussing the Beetaloo Cooperative Drilling Program (or the design of a grant program to expedite gas exploration in the Beetaloo prior to its commencement)? If so, could you provide that correspondence to the committee.
 - E. Can you explain why the correspondence from Empire Energy is referring to discussions about the grant program, its eligibility criteria and application process prior to the announcement of the program guidelines on 18 March 2021?
2. Please provide a copy of the unredacted email correspondence between you or your office and Empire Energy dated 14 January 2021, as referred to in FOI Disclosure Log 21-013-68011m, Document 4.

In this respect, the committee draws your attention to Senate Procedural Resolution 51 which clearly indicates that the fact that a freedom of information request for information

has been or could be refused under the FOI Act is not a legitimate basis for declining to provide documents or answer questions.

3. Have you or your office had any informal meetings or discussions with Empire Energy prior to 18 March 2021 about a grant program to expedite gas exploration in the Beetaloo, including for example at a CLP fundraising dinner held in Darwin in October 2020?
4. Please advise the committee whether you and Minister Pitt, or either of your respective offices, have discussed Empire Energy or its subsidiaries application for grant funding.
5. Can you clarify if you received an invitation for a site inspection at Empire Energy's proposed gas mine site in the Beetaloo Basin in the Northern Territory' direct from Empire Energy and if so, when?

The committee would appreciate your response to its questions by 3 November 2021.

Yours sincerely

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young
Chair



THE HON ANGUS TAYLOR MP
MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY, ENERGY AND EMISSIONS REDUCTION

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young
Chair
Environment and Communications References Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator

Thank you for your letter of 22 October 2021 regarding the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee inquiry into oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin.

Please find below a response covering the specific questions you have raised:

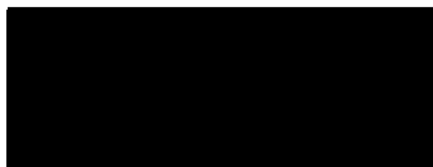
There have been no meetings, discussions or correspondence between the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction and Empire Energy or its subsidiaries in relation to the design of the Beetaloo Cooperative Drilling Program.

The Minister is not responsible for this Program. He had no role in the Program's design, the assessment of applications or the awarding of grant funding.

Correspondence from Empire Energy to an adviser in the office seeking further information about the Program, following its announcement on 17 December 2020, has been previously provided and is in the public domain.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



ANGUS TAYLOR