



7 July 2021

To the committee,

**Submission to the inquiry on oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin**

350.org Australia is a registered charity, and our charitable purpose is to inform and educate the general public about climate change and its impact on the natural environment, and encourage research into climate change. We are building a grassroots movement to stand up to the fossil fuel industry, and support a just transition from coal, oil and gas to a renewable-energy future for all. We have 60,000 supporters across the country.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. The Beetaloo Basin is a large shale gas resource in the Northern Territory, covering 28,000 square kilometres of Aboriginal and pastoral land. 350 Australia is deeply concerned by the plans for oil and gas exploration in the Beetaloo Basin and the government's plan to provide \$50 million in public money to oil and gas companies for fracking.

**Listen to Traditional Owners**

A number of Traditional Owners in the Beetaloo Basin region have raised significant issues with the plans to frack on their land. They detail gas companies' failure to follow process, failure to consult and the harm that fracking will cause to their country.<sup>1</sup> We urge the committee to hear from Traditional Owners who are being impacted by oil and gas exploration and to give them the right to say no to fracking on their land. In particular, the committee should hold community hearings on country, in the Beetaloo Basin, as a top priority.

**Climate impact**

The latest climate science tells us that we are in the critical decade for action and need to rapidly reduce emissions by 2030. Extracting and burning gas from the Beetaloo Basin will generate significant greenhouse gas pollution and poses an unacceptable climate risk. Australia should be focused on cutting emissions, not funding new fossil fuel projects.

The Beetaloo Basin is a large, untapped gas resource with modelling undertaken for the Australian Energy Market Operator estimating that it contains 6,999 petajoules of potentially recoverable gas.<sup>2</sup> If this gas is extracted and burnt it will lead to an additional 393 MT of CO<sub>2</sub>

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<sup>1</sup> GetUp, Open Letter from Traditional Owners, available [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> Core Energy Resources, 'Gas Reserves and Resources Cost Estimates', November 2019. Available [here](#).

equivalent pollution.<sup>3</sup> In comparison, the Northern Territory's annual emissions were 21 MT of CO<sub>2</sub>-e.<sup>4</sup>

The International Energy Agency (IEA), the world's energy authority, recently released a report that sets out a pathway to "Net Zero By 2050."<sup>5</sup> They state that investment in new fossil fuel supply is inconsistent with the pathway to net zero emissions. It is explicit that this includes no new gas fields and warns that existing gas fields may be closed prematurely. The report effectively sets a phase-out date for gas-fired power by requiring electricity generation to have net zero emissions by 2035 for OECD countries and 2040 worldwide.

The Northern Territory Fracking Inquiry recommended that there is no net increase in the life cycle greenhouse gas emissions from any onshore gas produced in the NT. It remains unclear how this recommendation will be met. Deloitte analysis, commissioned by the Federal Government, points to a Santos offset program in Queensland with 1,250 hectares of tree planting used as an offset for 30,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, ten thousand times smaller than what would be needed to offset Beetaloo Basin emissions.<sup>6</sup>

### **Grants program and integrity concerns**

The Beetaloo Cooperative Drilling Program provides \$50 million in non-competitive grants to oil and gas companies. There is no merit assessment and no process to show if companies need this money and no requirements for repayment if the exploration is successful.<sup>7</sup> The companies who stand to benefit from this program include Santos, Origin Energy and Empire Energy.

Empire Energy chair Paul Espie has made large donations to the Liberal Party and has been described as a "doyen" of the Liberal Party.<sup>8</sup> Energy Minister Angus Taylor travelled to Empire Energy's NT gas field in October 2020, even though he was not responsible for the resources portfolio. Documents released under Freedom of Information, attached, reveal extensive lobbying of Angus Taylor by Empire Energy. This included coordination around a party fundraiser and requests for early information about the grants scheme in January 2021. Resources Minister Keith Pitt announced on the 7th of July that \$21 million of the \$50 million grants program will go to Empire Energy.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Emissions calculated using IPCC (2006) 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories - Volume 2 Energy Table 1.4.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Government Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, National Greenhouse Accounts 2019. Available [here](#).

<sup>5</sup> International Energy Agency, 2021, "Net Zero by 2050: A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector", p 21.

<sup>6</sup> Deloitte, 2020, "Report on the Development of the Beetaloo Sub-basin", p 95. Available [here](#).

<sup>7</sup> Australian Government, Funding to accelerate exploration and appraisal activities in the Beetaloo sub-basin. Available [here](#).

<sup>8</sup> The Sydney Morning Herald, 2021, "It's a gas, gas, gas: How Aussie richlisters plan to unlock a fracking fortune in the NT", available [here](#).

<sup>9</sup> The Hon Keith Pitt MP, "Grants to help speed up Beetaloo drilling program", available [here](#).

**Community concerns**

Providing public money directly to polluting gas companies is strongly opposed in communities across Australia. Over a thousand 350 Australia supporters have taken the time to write to the committee with their concerns about fracking in the Beetaloo Basin and how they would prefer public money to be spent. These comments are enclosed and we encourage the committee to take the time to see the depth and breadth of community opposition to public funding for fossil fuel projects.

**Recommendations to the committee**

1. Hold hearings on country in the Beetaloo Basin to hear from Traditional Owners impacted by Beetaloo Basin fracking.
2. Recommend that the Beetaloo Competitive Drilling Program is disallowed by the Senate.
3. Investigate the origins of the grants program and the companies consulted.
4. Recommend any future grants schemes require climate impacts to be taken into consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Lucy Manne  
CEO  
350.org Australia

s47F

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**From:** Invitations Pitt  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 30 September 2020 9:26 AM  
**To:** 's47F'  
**Cc:** 's47F'  
**Subject:** RE: Invitation from Empire Energy to visit Beetaloo Basin Drilling Site [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Good Morning,

Thank you for the kind invitation to Minister Keith Pitt to join the site visit to your Beetaloo Basin drilling location, Carpentaria-1. Although the Minister is very interested to hear about the developments on this project, unfortunately he cannot attend due to prior commitments in Queensland that week.

Please do not hesitate to contact me in the future or if you have any further queries.

Regards,

s47F

Office of the Hon Keith Pitt MP  
Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia  
Ps47F  
s47F  
Suite M1.45 Parliament House, CANBERRA ACT 2600

OFFICIAL

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**From:** s47F  
**Sent:** Monday, 28 September 2020 1:23 PM  
**To:** Invitations Pitt  
**Cc:** s47F  
**Subject:** Invitation from Empire Energy to visit Beetaloo Basin Drilling Site

Dear Minister Pitt,

On behalf of the Chairman of Empire Energy, s47F, I am pleased to invite you to join a site visit to our Beetaloo Basin drilling location, Carpentaria-1, to take place on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October or Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October. We are currently drilling an exploration well targeting the key shales of the Beetaloo Basin, the Velkerri and Kyalla Shales, at this drilling location.

We will be joined on the site visit by Minister Taylor, members of Empire Energy's senior management team and Board, and members of the media.

We will depart from Darwin Airport's private aviation terminal at 7am on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October or Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October and return to Darwin the same afternoon.

I understand that meetings in Darwin with Northern Territory Government Ministers are being arranged by Minister Taylor's office and also a CLP fundraiser dinner.

Kind regards,

s47F



s47F

Empire Energy Group Limited

s47F

Level 19, 20 Bond Street Sydney NSW 2000

s47F

[www.empireenergygroup.net](http://www.empireenergygroup.net)

**From:** s22 @empiregp.net]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 8 October 2020 2:10 PM  
**To:** s22 @energy.gov.au>  
**Cc:** s22 @energy.gov.au>; s22 @energy.gov.au>; s22 @empiregp.net>  
**Subject:** Re: For Planning - NT Visit [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Hi s22  
Many thanks.  
I have CC'ed s22 from our office who will send through details shortly.  
s22 please note s22 attendance as per s22 email.  
Regards,  
s22

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**From:** s22  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 2:07:35 PM  
**To:** s22  
**Cc:** s22  
**Subject:** For Planning - NT Visit [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]  
Hi s22  
Thanks for your time on the phone just now.  
If you could please send through details of next Friday's visit (flight times etc) that would be greatly appreciated.  
Further, I have looped in my colleague s22 who will be on the visit.  
Cheers, s22

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s22

**OFFICE OF THE HON ANGUS TAYLOR MP**  
Member for Hume | Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction  
Parliament House, CANBERRA ACT 2600

s22

UNOFFICIAL

Freedom of Information

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**From:** s22  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 23 March 2021 3:19 PM  
**To:** s22  
**Subject:** FW: Fwd: Empire Energy Site Visit [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

s22  
s22 | Office of the Hon Angus Taylor MP  
s22 @energy.gov.au

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

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**From:** s22 @empiregp.net]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 14 October 2020 10:04 AM  
**To:** s22 @energy.gov.au>  
**Cc:** s22 @energy.gov.au>; s22 @energy.gov.au>  
**Subject:** RE: Fwd: Empire Energy Site Visit [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

Hi s22

Just a couple more things to note:

- 1) Anyone entering the Northern Territory from another location within Australia must complete a NT Border Entry application. See link below to complete as you will need to show this when entering the NT, give me a call if you would like help in completing.  
<https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/travel/quarantine>
- 2) Do you need transport pick up from hotel to Hardy Aviation terminal at 8 Slade Ct, Marrara on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October? I have arranged buses to pick up our staff from their hotel and I can ask the bus company to swing by the Hilton, Darwin and pick the Minister, s22 and you up?

Kind Regards,  
s22

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**From:** s22  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 13 October 2020 2:41 PM  
**To:** s22  
**Cc:** s22  
**Subject:** RE: Fwd: Empire Energy Site Visit [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

Hi s22

That would be great – thank you!

The Minister is a size 11, s22 is a size 10, and I am a ladies size 8.

Regards  
s22

s22  
s22 | Office of the Hon Angus Taylor MP  
s22

OFFICIAL:Sensitive

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**From:** s22 @empiregp.net]  
**Sent:** Monday, 12 October 2020 3:33 PM  
**To:** s22 @energy.gov.au>  
**Cc:** s22 @energy.gov.au>; s22 @energy.gov.au>  
**Subject:** RE: Fwd: Empire Energy Site Visit [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

Hi s22

Unfortunately, steel capped boots is a safety requirement. Slip on versions are fine.

If you can provide me with everyone's shoe size then Empire can arrange for steel capped boots to be provided.

Kind Regards,  
s22

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**From:** s22 @energy.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Monday, 12 October 2020 3:12 PM  
**To:** s22 @empiregp.net>  
**Cc:** s22 @energy.gov.au>; s22 @energy.gov.au>  
**Subject:** FW: Fwd: Empire Energy Site Visit [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

Hi s22

Just to double check, are we able to wear other sturdy boots that aren't steel capped, or does this not meet safety standards?

Are we able to borrow steel capped boots if not?

Thanks for checking.

Kind regards  
s22

s22

| Office of the Hon Angus Taylor MP

s22 @energy.gov.au

**From:** s22 @empiregp.net>  
**Date:** 9 October 2020 at 5:29:02 pm AEDT  
**To:** s22 @energy.gov.au>  
**Cc:** s22 @empiregp.net>, s22 @energy.gov.au>, s22 @energy.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Empire Energy Site Visit

Good afternoon s22

On behalf of s22 Empire Energy looks forward to hosting the Hon.  
Angus Taylor MP, s22 and s22 for the site visit to its first  
Beetaloo well, Carpentaria-1.

The itinerary for the site visit on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> of October is attached.



Please note the following key safety requirements for the site visit:

- Steel capped boots
- Long pants
- Long shirt (Empire will be giving everyone a long sleeved shirt with Empire logo)
- Empire will provide hard hats, ear plugs, safety glasses and disposable masks to wear on the charter flight and bus

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards,

s22

OFFICIAL:Sensitive

Freedom of Information

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**From:** s22 @empiregp.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, 4 January 2021 5:56 PM  
**To:** s22  
**Subject:** Beetaloo Grant Program

Hi s22

Happy new year.

Just before Christmas we discussed the Beetaloo Grant Program.

Have you been able to identify the eligibility criteria and application process? Or could you please put me in touch with someone in Minister Pitt's office who may be able to assist?

Thanks and regards,

s22

Empire Energy Group Limited

Ph: s22

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Freedom of Information

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**From:** s22 @empiregp.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 14 January 2021 6:43 PM  
**To:** s22  
**Cc:** s22  
**Subject:** Email to Minister Taylor from Empire Energy re Beetaloo Basin regulatory reform

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

Dear Minister Taylor Angus,

Happy new year. I hope you and your family have had a safe and relaxing Christmas break.

s47(1)(b)

s47(1)(b)

s22 and I would welcome the opportunity to meet you at your electoral office, at our Head Office in Sydney or in Canberra (subject to border restrictions) for further discussion.

Yours sincerely,

s22



s22

Empire Energy Group Limited

s22 [@empiregp.net](mailto:s22@empiregp.net)

Level 19, 20 Bond Street Sydney NSW 2000

Phone: s22 Mobile: s22

[www.empireenergygroup.net](http://www.empireenergygroup.net)

Freedom of Information

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**From:** s22  
**Sent:** Thursday, 25 February 2021 9:41 AM  
**To:** s22  
**Subject:** FW: 2021-14: Empire Energy [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
  
**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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OFFICIAL

**From:** s22  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 17 February 2021 12:42 PM  
**To:** s22 @empiregp.net>  
**Cc:** s22  
**Subject:** RE: 2021-14: Empire Energy [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Dear s22

Thank you for your confirmation.

I will leave your names with the Reception desk on the ground floor. They will provide you with passes to Level 21, where you will be directed by the AFP to our office on Level 19.

Please let me know if there will be any other attendees closer to the time,

Kind regards

s22

s22

OFFICE OF THE HON ANGUS TAYLOR MP  
MEMBER FOR HUME | MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND EMISSIONS REDUCTION  
SUITE M1. 26 PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA ACT 2600

s22

[@ENERGY.GOV.AU](mailto:@ENERGY.GOV.AU)

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OFFICIAL

**From:** s22 @empiregp.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 16 February 2021 5:43 PM  
**To:** s22 @energy.gov.au>  
**Cc:** s22  
**Subject:** RE: 2021-14: Empire Energy [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Dear s22

Many thanks for your email.

May I request that we meet Minister Taylor at 2pm on 10<sup>th</sup> March at 1 Bligh Street Sydney.

Kind regards,

s22

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**From:** s22 <[s22@energy.gov.au](mailto:s22@energy.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 16, 2021 5:06 PM  
**To:** s22 <[s22@empiregp.net](mailto:s22@empiregp.net)>  
**Subject:** FW: 2021-14: Empire Energy [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Dear s22

I hope you are well,

Thank you for your email to Minister Taylor below.

I would like to set up a meeting with you and s22 in the coming weeks. I have a few options below that may be suitable for you:

**2.00pm on Wednesday 10 March at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices, 1 Bligh Street, SYDNEY.**

**12.00pm on Tuesday 16 March at Parliament House, CANBERRA.**

**10.00am on Thursday 25 March at Parliament House, CANBERRA.**

I look forward to hearing back,

Kind regards

s22

s22

OFFICE OF THE HON ANGUS TAYLOR MP  
MEMBER FOR HUME | MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND EMISSIONS REDUCTION  
SUITE M1. 26 PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA ACT 2600  
s22

[@ENERGY.GOV.AU](mailto:s22@ENERGY.GOV.AU)

OFFICIAL  
OFFICIAL

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**From:** s22 <[s22@empiregp.net](mailto:s22@empiregp.net)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 14 January 2021 6:43 PM  
**To:** s22 <[s22@energy.gov.au](mailto:s22@energy.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** s22  
**Subject:** Email to Minister Taylor from Empire Energy re Beetaloo Basin regulatory reform

Dear Angus,

Happy new year. I hope you and your family have had a safe and relaxing Christmas break.

s47(1)(b)

s47(1)(b)

s22 and I would welcome the opportunity to meet you at your electoral office, at our Head Office in Sydney or in Canberra (subject to border restrictions) for further discussion.

Yours sincerely,

s22



s22

Empire Energy Group Limited

s22 [@empiregp.net](mailto:s22@empiregp.net)

Level 19, 20 Bond Street Sydney NSW 2000

Phone: s22 Mobile: s22

[www.empireenergygroup.net](http://www.empireenergygroup.net)

s22

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**Subject:** 10.30am Visit to Carpentaria-1 Site [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**Start:** Fri 16/10/2020 12:00 PM  
**End:** Fri 16/10/2020 2:00 PM  
**Recurrence:** (none)  
**Meeting Status:** Meeting organizer  
**Organizer:** Taylor, Angus  
**Required Attendees:** 'angus.taylor.mp@aph.gov.au'; s22 DLO Taylor



s22

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**Subject:** 6.30pm Dinner with Empire Energy (optional) [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**Location:** Wharf One Restaurant 19 Kitchener Drive, Darwin City  
**Start:** Fri 16/10/2020 8:00 PM  
**End:** Fri 16/10/2020 9:30 PM  
**Recurrence:** (none)  
**Meeting Status:** Meeting organizer  
**Organizer:** Taylor, Angus  
**Required Attendees:** s22 'Taylor, Angus (MP)'; s22