

Community Bulletin # 11

Hydraulic Fracturing Inquiry Implementation

Building a productive onshore gas industry that protects our unique environment and delivers local jobs

Strengthening environmental management of the Territory's petroleum industry

Strengthening regulation and increasing transparency was the focus of legislative changes made by the Northern Territory Government in the final months of 2018, building foundations for robust decision-making.

A suite of legislative amendments were made to bolster environmental management, including clearly separating the agency responsible for regulating the environmental impacts and the risks associated with onshore gas and the agency responsible for promoting the industry.

During the first quarter of 2019, the transfer of the authority for the *Petroleum (Environment) Regulations* and the *Environmental Offences* provisions of the *Petroleum Act* from the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources to the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources will take effect.

The *Water Amendment Bill 2019* was introduced to Parliament during the February sittings. This Bill addresses some of the key recommendations of the *Final Report of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory*, delivering four of the 135 recommendations.

Introduction of the Water Amendment Bill 2019

The series of amendments proposed in this Bill, introduced last week, fulfils the Government's commitment to strong environmental protections while supporting economic growth. The Bill also ensures that recommendations in the Final Report regarding relevant prohibitions are clearly legislated.

These prohibitions apply to the taking of surface water for petroleum activities, groundwater extraction close to landholders bores and the disposal of hydraulic fracturing waste to waterways and aquifers.

The Bill will not impede the recycling of water in hydraulic fracturing operations. This would improve water use efficiency and be managed through the risk assessment process associated with any Environment Management Plan approval.

Consultation on key aspects of implementation

Stakeholder consultation is underway and will continue in the first half of 2019 on key aspects of the implementation of the Final Report's recommendations. Elements where consultation is underway or imminent include;

Publishing of draft hydraulic fracturing EMPs for public comment

The *Petroleum (Environment) Regulations* were amended and commenced 19 December 2018 to provide for the publishing of draft hydraulic fracturing Environment Management Plans involving well drilling or hydraulic fracturing for public comment and consideration of public comments by the Minister before granting approval.

Code of Practice

Codes of Practice have been drafted to clearly define the standards and requirements for gas company operations, as recommended in the Final Report. The Codes of Practice have been drafted to address a number of the recommendations;

- Surface Activities Code of Practice
- Well Operations Code of Practice
- Wastewater Management Code of Practice
- Methane emissions Code of Practice

The Codes of Practice have been developed by technical working groups. Draft Codes of Practice are undergoing independent third party peer review and will be released for public comment in early 2019. The Codes of Practice will be finalised soon after and will be made enforceable via legislation.

Water Extraction Licences for consideration and public comment

Water Extraction Licences by petroleum companies are now subject to the advertising, notification and assessment provisions of the *Water Act*. These provisions include the public advertising of a notice of intention that triggers a 30-day period during which submissions can be made.

More information about the water extraction licensing process can be found at <https://nt.gov.au/environment/water> or by emailing the Water Resources Division of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources at water.licensing@nt.gov.au

The NT Government's [Water Licensing Portal](#) provides information about all pending and current water extraction licences.

More information

To read the Implementation Plan or access additional information, please visit hydraulicfracturing.nt.gov.au

To read the Inquiry report and recommendations, please visit frackinginquiry.nt.gov.au

Or you can contact the Hydraulic Fracturing Inquiry Implementation Taskforce at hydraulic.fracturing@nt.gov.au

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