



## MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT

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Committee Secretary  
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Dear Committee Secretary,

Further to the Written Question on Notice provided by the Northern Territory Government to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications ("the Committee") following the inquiry into oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin ("the Inquiry") hearing held in Darwin on 22 March 2022, I write to provide additional context and correct specific testimony that was presented.

The Northern Territory Labor Government is one of enduring integrity, and I reiterate our commitment to implementing all 135 recommendations of the Final Report of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing of Onshore Unconventional Reservoirs in the Northern Territory (the Final Report) by the Hon Justice Rachel Pepper, prior to commencement of production.

Mr Dan Robins appeared before the Committee as a representative of Lock the Gate Alliance, where he presented a number of untruths to support a discourse of collusion, coercion and corruption. Mr Robins asserted that in my capacity as Minister for Environment, I travelled to Texas, United States of America to meet with Halliburton, an American multinational oil field services company; and then continued his remarks to include "...with her coming back and telling constituents that fracking is safe and that there are no problems with shale gas in Northern America". This assertion is entirely false and to date, I have not met with Halliburton or its representatives in any capacity, nor have I formed an opinion as to the safety of the shale gas industry as a whole in North America.

It is publicly known that I attended the United States of America between 12 and 19 November 2019 to represent the Northern Territory in an official capacity across a number of portfolios, and to advocate for its interests. I reported my attendance to the Northern



Territory Legislative Assembly on 27 November 2019. In addition to being publicly available and as it relates to my environment portfolio, my itinerary is summarised below for your records:

- **Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection**

I met with the Department of Environmental Protection to understand Pennsylvania's approach to environmental management as it relates to regulation of the oil and gas industry, and to identify key 'lessons learned'. The Committee should note the sentiment of the Department of Environmental Protection was that in hindsight, it was regretful it could not have taken the same scientific, measured and regulated approach as the Northern Territory.

- **Shell Pennsylvania**

I met with Shell Pennsylvania to discuss the attraction of 'downstream' projects, as well as opportunities and lessons the Northern Territory could learn for projects proposed at that time which included Coogee Chemicals proposed plant and Gold Valley Energy Micro LNG facility.

- **Tom Wolf, Governor of Pennsylvania**

I met with Tom Wolf, Governor of Pennsylvania to discuss policy, environmental management, workforce development, fly in-fly out versus local workforce, and community benefits that can be captured from large scale projects.

- **Marcellus Centre for Outreach and Research, Pennsylvania State University**

I met with the Marcellus Centre for Outreach and Research to discuss the history of the onshore industry, how early environmental issues were managed, the evolution of water treatment technology and processes, waste water recycling, infrastructure, opportunities that can be derived from waste, as well as reversing fly in-fly out workforce models.

I reject all connotations of collusion, coercion and corruption made during the course of the Committee's hearings. I echo the emphasis of the Hon Justice Rachel Pepper that 'a robust regulatory framework is the principal way by which any onshore unconventional shale gas industry can safely develop in a manner which also protects the environment and meets community expectations'. To that end, forming an inclusive and unbiased view of lessons learned from other jurisdictions' who are well established in onshore gas development and regulation, is paramount to environmental protection in the Northern Territory. I would consider it negligent had this very approach not been taken.

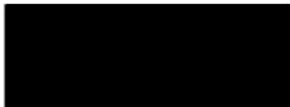
Mr Robins further alleges I lack commitment to the constituents I represent and that I am unable to serve them impartially, which is truly offensive. Meeting with constituents is an activity I constantly undertake, and one which I find particularly enjoyable. Some constituents and groups have differing views to the policies this Government was elected to implement, which is their right and which this Government nevertheless recognises as fundamentally necessary to cultivating a modern, transparent democracy.

Mr Dixon and his brother were part of a large protesting group that attended my Electorate Office on 16 January 2020, organised by Mr Dan Robins. I agreed to meet with Mr Dixon, his brother, and a constituent of my electorate. In this meeting, it was apparent that they had little understanding of the onshore oil and gas processes, and I committed to providing them with factual information. In follow up, I pursued the Department of Chief Minister and

Cabinet committing to provide increased information to Aboriginal people living in the Beetaloo region.

I then met with Mr Dixon and others in my Ministerial office on 10 May 2021. I committed to meet with Mr Dixon again on-country though, as you would be aware, in 2020 and 2021 the Commonwealth Government declared much of the Northern Territory to be a biosecurity zone in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Northern Territory Government had also implemented various social restrictions and lock-downs in an effort to keep Territorians, and indeed our most vulnerable Territorians, safe from infection for as long as possible. To alleviate this isolation and in recognising my commitment, my long term colleague, former Northern Territory Cabinet Minister and Member for Barkly the Hon Gerry McCarthy, met with Mr Dixon on my behalf as he was able to travel within the Barkly region where Mr Dixon resides.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of Eva Lawler.

EVA LAWLER

31 MAR 2022