



Nurrdalinji Native Title Aboriginal Corporation

ABN: 32 608 508 769

ICN: 9392

**Senate Environment and
Communications Reference
Committee**

**Inquiry into Oil and Gas Production
in the Beetaloo Sub-basin**

**Supplementary Submission from
Nurrdalinji Native Title Aboriginal Corporation
30 August 2022**

Overview

The board and members of Nurrdalinji Native Title Aboriginal Corporation ("Nurrdalinji") would like to present this supplementary submission to our original submission (sub. 18) delivered to you in July 2021.

Our concerns that fracking will damage our country, water, sacred sites and songlines, which are passed down for us to look after, have become even stronger since we made that submission.

We believe that with this new Federal Parliament, and the speed in which fracking companies are now looking to launch production on our country, now is the time for the government to recognise that gas companies must properly consult with us about their fracking plans and recognise our right to have the final say on whether they go ahead.

At the time when exploration agreements were signed, our people did not understand fracking. We still don't, let alone what full production will mean for us.

The Northern Land Council (NLC) continues to facilitate fracking in our country without proper consultation, with no genuine mandate and against the wishes of most people. Gas companies use the Northern Land Council as a vehicle to push through their plans. We remain unclear about the risks and are provided with no information to understand the scale of what's ahead.

As we explained in our first submission, there is no opportunity for the region's native title holders to understand the benefits and impacts of the project as a whole. Or, most importantly, about what the many projects planned across the Beetaloo Basin will mean, with their combined impact on water, country, our plants and animals and cultural heritage sites. Without that knowledge, informed decisions cannot be made.

Protecting Our Sacred Sites and Songlines Directive

This failure of the NLC and gas companies in the NT to adequately consult was discussed at a meeting of our Directors and members in Daly Waters, NT on 13-14 August 2022. Senior Traditional Owners and custodians met together to talk about how we want to protect our places which hold a special meaning and significance for us from fracking damage. We include as an attachment to this supplementary submission, for your close consideration, a statement from this meeting which is highly relevant to the work of the inquiry.

Recent events

Since we put in our first submission, Nurrdalinji Directors and members have been doing our best to scrutinise the plans and activities of fracking companies' in the Beetaloo Basin.

For example, we have three times visited Santos' flaring fracking wells on Tanumbirini Cattle Station. This has painted an alarming picture for us of what 100s more wells, new pipelines and construction will do to their country, sacred sites and waterways.

Senior Alawa man and a Nurrdalinji member, Alan Watson, explains, *"Tanumbirini is a special place because there's the songlines there and special ceremonies that happened there in the olden days. Last month I visited Tanumbirini and saw with my own eyes what fracking by Santos looks like. I felt the heat and smelt the fuel. We don't want hundreds of wells across our country, or for sacred sites to be destroyed to do it."*

In June 2022, Tamboran Resources' subsidiary, Sweetpea Petroleum, which is also exploring for gas on Tanumbirini, locked out both the station owner and our Chair, Johnny Wilson. Mr Wilson was there on his country to visit a songline, Newcastle Creek, ahead of roadworks due to begin that day which risk damaging the sacred waterway.



Johnny Wilson and Pierre Langenhoven, Tanumbirini Station owner, on discovering Sweetpea had blocked access.

Nurrdalinji notified the NT's sacred sites authority, the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA), of our fears. This is because we believe anything that goes wrong with this sacred waterway will cost us our lives. We believe in our culture. It's very old. Our lives will be taken if we have not spoken up and protected our country. Our songline will be broken.

We submitted a detailed letter of concern about Sweetpea's damaging bid to build a road over the creek, which has many sacred sites and carries songlines across this region. The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority has responded by undertaking a compliance audit of Sweetpea's works done so far at the cattle station. We are yet to find out if Northern Territory laws are strong enough to protect the area.

This kind of behaviour by Tamboran Resources is representative of the lack of respect these companies have for our country, our rights and our culture. It is also in tune with the [past behaviour of Tamboran Resources](#) and its failure to appear before the Inquiry, despite receiving \$7.5 million in public money from the former government. We believe this Inquiry should hold Tamboran to account for this kind of arrogant behaviour.

Our Request for Assistance

Our request for assistance made in our first submission remain current:

- 1. That the Committee call for a pause on the grant of further rights to frack in the Beetaloo Sub-basin region** until a credible plan is proposed to address the complete lack of free, prior, informed consent among the region's native title holders.
- 2. That the Committee examine the representative arrangements put in place for the NLC and the Top End Default PBC** and investigate the monies given to the NLC to facilitate agreements in the Beetaloo Sub-basin region.

We would like to add to these two requests the two demands that came out of our 13-14 August 2022 meeting and related *Protecting Our Sacred Sites and Songlines Directive* found below.

- 3. That the NLC should properly represent us.** The Northern Land Council should properly advise us and faithfully represent our views and start to respect our right to determine what happens on our country, so we can organise, take advice, make timely group decisions and engage effectively with fracking companies, governments and other developers.
- 4. That the NLC hold a regional summit.** The Northern Land Council should use the \$2.1 million it received from the Federal government in March 2022 for the purposes of consulting in the Beetaloo Basin to hold a regional summit. This summit should be organised in consultation with Beetaloo Basin native title holders so we all have a say in what happens on country, providing native title holders with information to make informed decisions, as a group, about whether to give consent to fracking on our country.

Thank you for considering this submission.



Johnny Wilson
Nurrdalinji Chairperson

ATTACHMENT



Nurrdalinji Native Title Aboriginal Corporation

ABN: 32 608 508 769

ICN: 9392

Protecting Our Sacred Sites and Songlines Directive *Beetaloo Basin - 14 August 2022*

Introduction

The Nurrdalinji Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (Nurrdalinji) was incorporated in 2020 and is made up of over 60 native title holders from 11 native title determination areas throughout the Beetaloo Basin. Nurrdalinji was formed following an historic meeting of native title holders from throughout the Beetaloo Basin at Daly Waters.

The name “Nurrdalinji” means “mixed tribe” in Alawa language, reflecting members’ diversity and unity. Nurrdalinji’s purpose is to support members to be consulted about what happens on their country. It seeks to enable its members to be heard and to determine their future aspirations for their country.

At a meeting in Daly Waters, NT on 13-14 August 2022 Senior Traditional Owners and custodians met together to talk about how we want to protect our places which hold a special meaning and significance for us from fracking damage.

Our concerns

For too long companies have been able to get away with damaging our land and sacred places. They have never properly consulted us. We will not sit by while plans for exploration move to production without due consultation. These companies need to leave, cease any new works and remove all equipment that is currently destroying our country.

We don’t believe the claims that there are benefits in this industry for us, when there are limited jobs, limited financial outcomes and when the actual costs to country and the climate are just too high.

Everyone is worried about fracking and the proposed scale. It would leave a scar on the earth, take too much water from our creeks and underground water. We don't want it to go ahead. But the companies are not listening to us, and experience tells us they will go ahead and do fracking without our permission.

Once companies put hundreds of wells across the Beetaloo Basin, where are we going to take our kids fishing and hunting? Where are we going to go when they damage and pollute our water? What's going to happen to all our sacred songlines if this fracking goes ahead?

We don't believe the Northern Territory Government or the gas companies will protect sacred sites and waterways. They are rushing to get exploration done and are already cutting corners and making mistakes. The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) must make sure that companies are doing the right thing and safeguard these sites from harm.

The Northern Land Council (NLC) is meant to be our representative body. It needs to consult with the right people and sort out the old anthropology which was done in a hurry. No one we speak with has ever understood, or now understands, the scale of what is coming. This is why we think it is so important to consult broadly, with all the right people. We have asked many times for a regional meeting of Traditional Owners across the Beetaloo, and are determined to see this happen.

What we want

The NLC should properly represent us. The Northern Land Council should properly advise us and faithfully represent our views and start to respect our right to determine what happens on our country, so we can organise, take advice, make timely group decisions and engage effectively with fracking companies, governments and other developers.

The NLC should hold a regional summit. The Northern Land Council should use the \$2.1 million it received from the Federal government in March 2022 for the purposes of consulting in the Beetaloo Basin to hold a regional summit. This summit should be organised in consultation with Beetaloo Basin native title holders so we all have a say in what happens on country, providing native title holders with information to make informed decisions, as a group, about whether to give consent to fracking on our country.

From Johnny Wilson, Sam Daylight, Gillian Limmen, Samuel Sandy, Elaine Sandy, Josephine John, Bradley Farrar, Janet Gregory, Alan Watson, William John, Peter Ellis, Loris Hume, Dean Nugget, Abel Lansen, Pearl Hodgson, May August.