



THE SENATE

**ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS REFERENCES COMMITTEE**

22 October 2021

The Hon Keith Pitt MP  
Minister for Resources and Water  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Pitt

**Oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin**

Thank you for your letter dated 15 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. Can you please advise the committee whether Empire Energy or any of its staff verbally communicated with you or your office in relation to the eligibility criteria and application process for the grant program prior to 18 March 2021?
2. Did you or your office receive a copy, have knowledge of or participate in an email exchange between the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction and Empire Energy dated 14 January 2021 (FOI Disclosure Log 21-013-68011m, p. 6, attached)?

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. Can you advise whether you or your office discussed with Minister Taylor or his office communications between them and Empire in relation to the grant program? Please provide the committee with a copy of any written documentation evidencing that discussion?
4. FOI Disclosure Document 68003 (attached) appears to show correspondence to or from Empire Energy on 6 January 2021. Please provide a copy of this unredacted email, again noting Procedural Resolution 51.
5. Have you and Minister Taylor, or your respective offices, discussed applications and applicants for funding under the grant program?

6. In relation to the identification of requested documents, please see Order for Production of Documents No. 1209 at p. 114, which refers to Attachment A (BCDP Funding Matrix) and Attachment B (Disclosure of Interests), and at p. 115, which refers to 'all Attachments [that] form the minutes of the Beetaloo Cooperative Drilling Program Committee meeting held on 24 May 2021'.

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

Yours sincerely

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young  
**Chair**