



The Mullum Trust
environmental philanthropy

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

I would like to make input to the Senate Committee looking into oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin, examining in particular Industry Research and Development (Beetaloo Cooperative Drilling Program) Instrument 2021.

I am writing on my own behalf as well as that of my fellow trustees of The Mullum Trust, a philanthropic trust with a focus on environmental issues. We are very concerned at the proposed opening of the Beetaloo Basin to fracking for gas on several accounts:

- While fracking has been used to extract gas in several countries over a number of years, its long term effects on water quality and the water table have not yet had time to be revealed. There is much independent scientific advice warning that there is likely to be significant contamination. The precautionary principle means that we can not afford to take risks with this most precious of Australia's resources, particularly as the impacts of climate change make themselves increasingly felt. Submissions to the contrary by the gas industry must be very closely examined as they can not simply be accepted as disinterested.
- Impacts on the sensitive ancient environment of the Northern Territory are of very great concern to the indigenous owners of the land, and thus are of additional significance for those of us with broad environmental anxiety. Many of these groups are telling us that they have not been properly consulted, and informed consent to this profound interference with their homelands has not been granted. Again, claims that there has been sufficient negotiation with traditional owners need to be understood in the context of the self-interest of the mines' proponents. The time when priority is given to commercial interests over those of traditional owners must be behind us.
- There is urgency on the part of the proponents because of the increasing pressure from the rest of the world for Australia to recognise and rise to the challenge of climate change. It is bizarre that it takes international voices to tell us that we are already suffering the impacts of climate change and that it will only get worse. Gas fracking invariably releases methane into the atmosphere, with greenhouse impacts more than 80 times worse than those of carbon dioxide. Australia currently has the second highest per capita CO2 emissions of all countries in the world: the shameful and self-destructive rush to exploit our fossil fuel resources is profoundly irresponsible.

We urge the Committee to respect the wishes of the traditional owners, accept the climate science and recommend that the Senate reject the use of taxpayer funds to open the Beetaloo to gas mining.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Mathews
For the Trustees of The Mullum Trust