
Submission to the Senate Inquiry into oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin

15 September, 2022



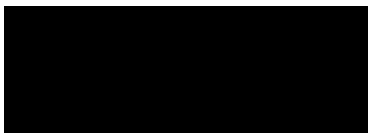
Submission to the Senate Inquiry into oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin

The Centre for Independent Studies (CIS) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Inquiry into oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin.

The CIS is a leading independent public policy think tank in Australia. It has been a strong advocate for free markets and limited government for more than 40 years. The CIS is independent and non-partisan in both its funding and research, does no commissioned research nor takes any government money to support its public policy work.

We would be happy to expand on the points in the attached submission, or to provide further information if this would assist the Commission.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Nyunggai Warren Mundine.

Nyunggai Warren Mundine

Director, Indigenous Forum, Centre for Independent Studies

The Northern Territory's remote and very remote regions have the worst economic outcomes for Indigenous Australians compared to its counterparts. Evidence of such outcomes are expressed clearly in figures presented in Peter Gregory's recent publication for the Centre of Independent Studies. The weekly income and unemployment rates of the Northern Territory compared to the rest of Australia (figures 1-5) show:

- The Northern Territory's remote Indigenous communities have the least median weekly income (\$325). Compared to non-Indigenous Australians in remote regions, the median weekly income for the Northern Territory is \$1056 and \$1144 in very remote regions.
- The unemployment rate for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory in remote areas was 20.2% in 2016 whilst the un-employment rate for non-Indigenous peoples was 2.7%.
- From these statistics it is clear that Indigenous Australians and their communities would benefit from the economic income the Beetaloo project would be able to provide for income and employment rates in remote communities.

The economic opportunity that oil and gas exploration in the Beetaloo Basin will create would enormously benefit Indigenous communities in the area as well as the Territory economy as a whole. Indigenous Australians living in remote and very remote communities of the Northern Territory display the worst economic outcomes in the country, compared to other Indigenous communities.

Indigenous Traditional Owners have expressed their desire for the economic stimulus of the oil and gas exploration to go ahead by giving their consent to the Northern Land Council and publishing their views in the *Land Rights News: Northern Edition* July 2022.

Jingili Elder and Native Title Holder Pompey Raymond was interviewed about his beliefs that the debate around oil and gas exploration was being hijacked by those who should not be speaking for the region. On Warranangku Country, Mr Raymond said the voices who could rightfully speak for country were clear in their support. Mr Raymond sees careers for young people, education, community infrastructure and a pathway to protect his country. As the article outlines there are Traditional Owners that trust operators to conduct fracking safely.

It's important for the Committee to consider this information in making a recommendation on operations in the Beetaloo Basin. The project with the Beetaloo Basin would be able to help close the gap for remote Northern Territory communities as well as raise the economic and educational opportunities of those in remote and very remote communities.

[Fig. 1]

Table 3: Indigenous income in remote areas – 2006, 2011, 2016 censuses

	Median personal income (\$/week)		
	2006	2011	2016
NSW	247	354	421
WA	319	388	460
QLD	252	340	384
SA	309	362	456
NT	223	289	325

Source: ABS (2017), '2016 Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile', ABS cat. no. 2002.0, Canberra; ABS (2012), 2011 Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (Indigenous) Profile', ABS cat. no. 2002.0, Canberra; ABS (2007), '2006 Census Community Profile Series, Indigenous Profile, ABS cat. no. 2002.0, Canberra.

[Fig. 2]

Table 4: non-Indigenous income in remote areas – 2011 & 2016 censuses

	Median personal income (\$/week)	
	2011	2016
NSW	509	643
WA	885	990
QLD	670	669
SA	538	620
NT	913	1056

Source: ABS (2017), '2016 Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile', ABS cat. no. 2002.0, Canberra; ABS (2012), 2011 Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (Indigenous) Profile', ABS cat. no. 2002.0, Canberra.

[Fig. 3]

Table 6: non-Indigenous income in very remote areas – 2011 & 2016 censuses

	Median personal income (\$/week)	
	2011	2016
NSW	550	668
WA	1485	1492
QLD	662	756
SA	651	743
NT	1026	1144

Source: ABS (2017), '2016 Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile', ABS cat. no. 2002.0, Canberra; ABS (2012), 2011 Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (Indigenous) Profile', ABS cat. no. 2002.0, Canberra.

[Fig. 4]

Table 7: Indigenous unemployment and participation in remote areas – 2006, 2011, 2016 censuses

	Unemployment rate (%)*			Participation rate (%)		
	2006**	2011	2016	2006	2011	2016
NSW	30.4	16.9	21.3	47.5	45.5	46.2
WA	14.8	17.0	19.7	50.0	46.7	48.7
QLD	6.4	21.6	22.9	51.9	52.6	50.2
SA	14.9	17.2	18.7	48.8	48.0	50.7
NT	11.8	16.3	20.2	50.0	38.5	37.0

Source: ABS (2017), '2016 Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile', ABS cat. no. 2002.0, Canberra; ABS (2012), 2011 Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (Indigenous) Profile', ABS cat. no. 2002.0, Canberra; ABS (2007), '2006 Census Community Profile Series, Indigenous Profile, ABS cat. no. 2002.0, Canberra.

[Fig. 5]

Table 8: non-Indigenous unemployment and participation in remote areas – 2011 & 2016 censuses

	Unemployment rate (%)		Participation rate (%)	
	2011	2016	2011	2016
NSW	3.6	3.9	66.6	66.7
WA	2.6	3.8	78.0	76.8
QLD	2.8	7.2	72.5	65.4
SA	3.8	4.6	65.5	63.5
NT	2.3	2.7	80.8	79.5

Source: ABS (2017), '2016 Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile', ABS cat. no. 2002.0, Canberra; ABS (2012), '2011 Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (Indigenous) Profile', ABS cat. no. 2002.0, Canberra.

Sources:

Fig. 1- 5.

Gregory, P., 2022. *The Territory Gap*. The Centre of Independent Studies. Available at: <https://www.cis.org.au/publication/the-territory-gap/>

Northern Territory Economy. 2022. *Economic growth of the Northern Territory*. Available at: <https://nteconomy.nt.gov.au/economic-growth>

Zaunmayr, T., 2022. *Traditional Owners in the Top End are fed up with antifracking activists interfering on their country*. Northern Land Council. Available at: <https://www.nlc.org.au/media-publications/traditional-owners-in-the-top-end-are-fed-up-with-antifracking-activists-interfering-on-their-country>