



**5 October 2022**

Senator the Hon Karen Grogan  
*Chair of Environment and Communications Legislation Committee*

Senator the Hon Sarah Hanson-Young  
*Deputy Chair of Environment and Communications References Committee*

Cc     Senator the Hon Catryna Bilyk  
  
          Senator the Hon Hollie Hughes  
  
          Senator the Hon Ross Cadell  
  
          Senator the Hon Fatima Payman

Dear Senator Grogan & Senator Hanson-Young,

**RE: Tamboran Resources and the Inquiry into oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin**

Our organisations welcome the additional hearing for the Senate inquiry into oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin. We were appalled that recipients of public money under this scheme, Tamboran Resources (whose subsidiary is Sweetpea Petroleum), attempted to avoid accountability to the Senate by failing to appear at previous hearings.

The hearing on 10 October 2022 is an opportunity for the Committee to fully scrutinise Tamboran Resources and assess the appropriateness of granting public money to fracking corporations. To that end, we are writing to you with key information regarding Tamboran Resources for consideration ahead of your hearing:

## 1. Funding and partnerships

On 19 September 2022, Origin Energy announced their plans to sell 100% of their Beetaloo Basin stakes to Tamboran Resources. In the days that followed, Tamboran Resources raised more than \$195 million in capital.<sup>1</sup> This included significant cash injections from Bryan Sheffield and Helmerich & Payne.<sup>2</sup>

- US oil and gas tycoon Bryan Sheffield contributed \$82 million in return for a 15% shareholding in Tamboran Resources, a 38% operating interest in the Origin Energy assets (see Appendix A), and a 2.3% overriding royalty interest across all Tamboran Resources assets. This was in addition to a \$35 million cash injection from Sheffield in November 2021.<sup>3</sup> Sheffield also has a 8.66% shareholding in Falcon Oil & Gas, and therefore is now heavily invested in seeing the Beetaloo Basin reach production.
- \$22 million from US gas and oil rig corporation, Helmerich & Payne, including a two-year rig contract for Rig 469. This massive rig would be imported from the US. It is capable of drilling 4-kilometre horizontal fracking wells,<sup>4</sup> twice as long as existing horizontal frack wells. This would entail a huge increase in water, sand and chemical use, and would also make it more likely to encounter well integrity challenges such as faults and fissures (see Appendix B). It would also likely result in a substantial increase in greenhouse emissions from the drilling operation, with far more gas per well needing to be flared. Helmerich & Payne has been responsible for five workplace deaths in the US.<sup>5</sup> It should alarm the Committee that Tamboran Resources is associated so heavily with a corporation with such abysmal and tragic workplace safety statistics, as well as the climate and environmental impacts of such machinery.

## 2. Political donations

In addition to these questionable foreign cash injections, Tamboran Resources has also made political donations to the Australian Labor Party, totalling \$3,500 in the year 2020-2021.<sup>6</sup> Then, in August 2022, they attempted to lobby the Albanese Government to change their landmark climate legislation and ditch the bare minimum 1.5 degree target.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Tamboran Resources buys Origin Energy's Beetaloo Basin gas exploration stakes*, ABC News, 20 September 2022.

<sup>2</sup> *Acquisition of Origin Energy's Beetaloo Basin Assets and Equity Raising*, Tamboran Resources, 20 September 2022.

<sup>3</sup> *Tamboran Resources welcomes US oil & gas giant as cornerstone investor*, Proactive Investors, 23 November 2021.

<sup>4</sup> *Tamboran Resources JV to snap up Origin's Beetaloo Basin gas assets; secures \$22 million strategic investment and drill contract with Helmerich and Payne*, Proactive Investors, 20 September 2022.

<sup>5</sup> *Driller at center of Oklahoma well blast has history of deadly accidents*, Reuters, 27 January 2018.

<sup>6</sup> *Tamboran Resources*, AEC Transparency Register.

<sup>7</sup> *Australia should abandon goal to limit global heating to 1.5C, says gas company eyeing Beetaloo Basin*, The Guardian, 10 August 2022.

Major investor Bryan Sheffield is no stranger to political donations either. He and his wife have donated 449,500USD to the Texan Republican Party and their candidates since 2016, as well 532,500USD to conservative lobby groups in Texas (see Appendix C).<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Overseas opposition

In 2014, Tamboran Resources' exploration license for fracking in Northern Ireland was terminated after it was discovered that they didn't have any planning permissions in place but had already commenced excavating and blasting.<sup>9</sup> They then threatened legal action against two Northern Irish government departments for damages to cover lost profits.<sup>10</sup> Current Board members Patrick Elliot and Frederick Barrett were on the Board of Tamboran Resources at the time (see Appendix D).

### 4. Community opposition

Over the past year, Tamboran Resources and their subsidiary Sweetpea Petroleum have confronted Traditional Owners and pastoralists of the area around Tanumbirini Station. Both Traditional Owners and pastoralists oppose fracking due to the impacts on climate, water, and cultural heritage sites, and believe Tamboran Resources and Sweetpea Petroleum forced entry via the NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal.<sup>11</sup> Traditional Owners believe Sweetpea Petroleum crossed a creek protected by the NT Sacred Sites Act, and cleared trees.<sup>12</sup>

In their 2022 Annual Report, Tamboran Resources states they work closely with "recognised Traditional Owners of the land within our permits of the Beetaloo Basin" and that they "have a royalty agreement already in place with native title owners."<sup>13</sup> Given Tamboran Resources is a recipient of public funds, the details of these royalties should be made available to the Committee.

Now that they are operating licenses previously held by Origin Energy, Tamboran Resources should publicly disclose any and all materials (maps, translators etc.) used in consent negotiations with communities in and around the Beetaloo and McArthur Basins to the Committee. Since Origin Energy first indicated its plans to frack the Beetaloo Basin, Traditional Owners staunchly opposed them. This opposition remains unchanged after Tamboran Resources acquisition.

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<sup>8</sup> Sharroll and Bryan S Sheffield, *Transparency USA*.

<sup>9</sup> Tamboran's license terminated, *Good Energies Alliance Ireland*, 1 October 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Fracking firm Tamboran to sue Stormont departments over thwarted Fermanagh drilling plans, *Belfast Telegraph*, 19 November 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Pastoralist company to join forces with Beetaloo Basin traditional owners to resist gas exploration, *The Guardian*, 27 May 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Traditional Owners say sacred sites damaged by fracking operations, *NITV*, 28 June 2022.

<sup>13</sup> 2022 Annual Report, *Tamboran Resources*, September 2022.

It is our belief that these factors make Tamboran Resources and their associates inappropriate recipients of public funds and government support. We urge the Committee to incorporate this information into their questioning of Tamboran Resources at the hearing on 10 October 2022, and to once again consider the following recommendations:

1. No further Commonwealth funding, or public money, is provided to exploration or drilling in the Beetaloo Basin, and any funding previously promised but not yet delivered be cancelled;
2. There be an immediate moratorium on exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin to allow for an investigation into the question of consent from Traditional Owners;
3. All 135 of the recommendations from the 2017 Northern Territory Independent Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracking are fully implemented;
4. A new, Federal cultural heritage protection law be created, in this term of Parliament, which:
  - a. is national in scope and fully reflective of the principles of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC);
  - b. is drafted in consultation with Traditional Owners;
  - c. is protective of things like oral traditions, songs, dances, stories and knowledge of country;
  - d. only allows the right people who have connection responsibility to talk for country;
  - e. ensures that Traditional Owners are the ones who decide if something is culturally significant or not, and how important a place is;
  - f. allows for a veto by Traditional Owners of projects that harm cultural heritage;
  - g. allows Traditional Owners to change their mind at any time during the project if Oil and gas exploration and production in the Beetaloo Basin places cultural heritage at risk; and
  - h. mandates that the Minister for Indigenous Australians is responsible for consulting with Traditional Owners on these issues.
5. All future gas field fracking proposals must legally require the relevant corporations to draft a plan to protect cultural heritage which must then

be approved by Traditional Owners before any action can be taken on a project;

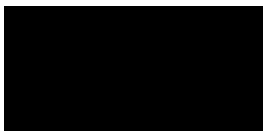
6. Ban the import of the Helmerich and Payne rig 469 pending an assessment of the increased impacts and risks associated with its potential use in the Beetaloo Basin;

7. Any future Federal grants schemes require climate impacts to be taken into consideration, and;


8. There must be stronger punishment for corporations that damage cultural heritage.

Please do not hesitate to contact Larissa Baldwin, CEO of GetUp! (details below) should you require any further information.

Sincerely,

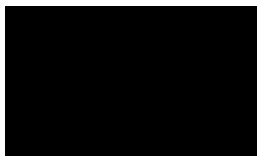


**Larissa Baldwin**

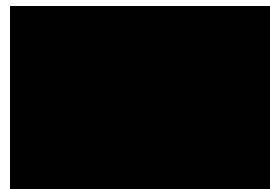
Larissa Baldwin  
Chief Executive Officer  
GetUp!  
E: 



Kirsty Howey  
Co-Director  
Environment Centre NT



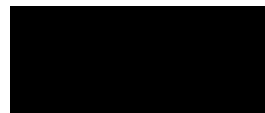
Angel Owen  
Organising & Co-Campaign Director  
Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network



Shar Molloy  
Co-Director  
Environment Centre NT

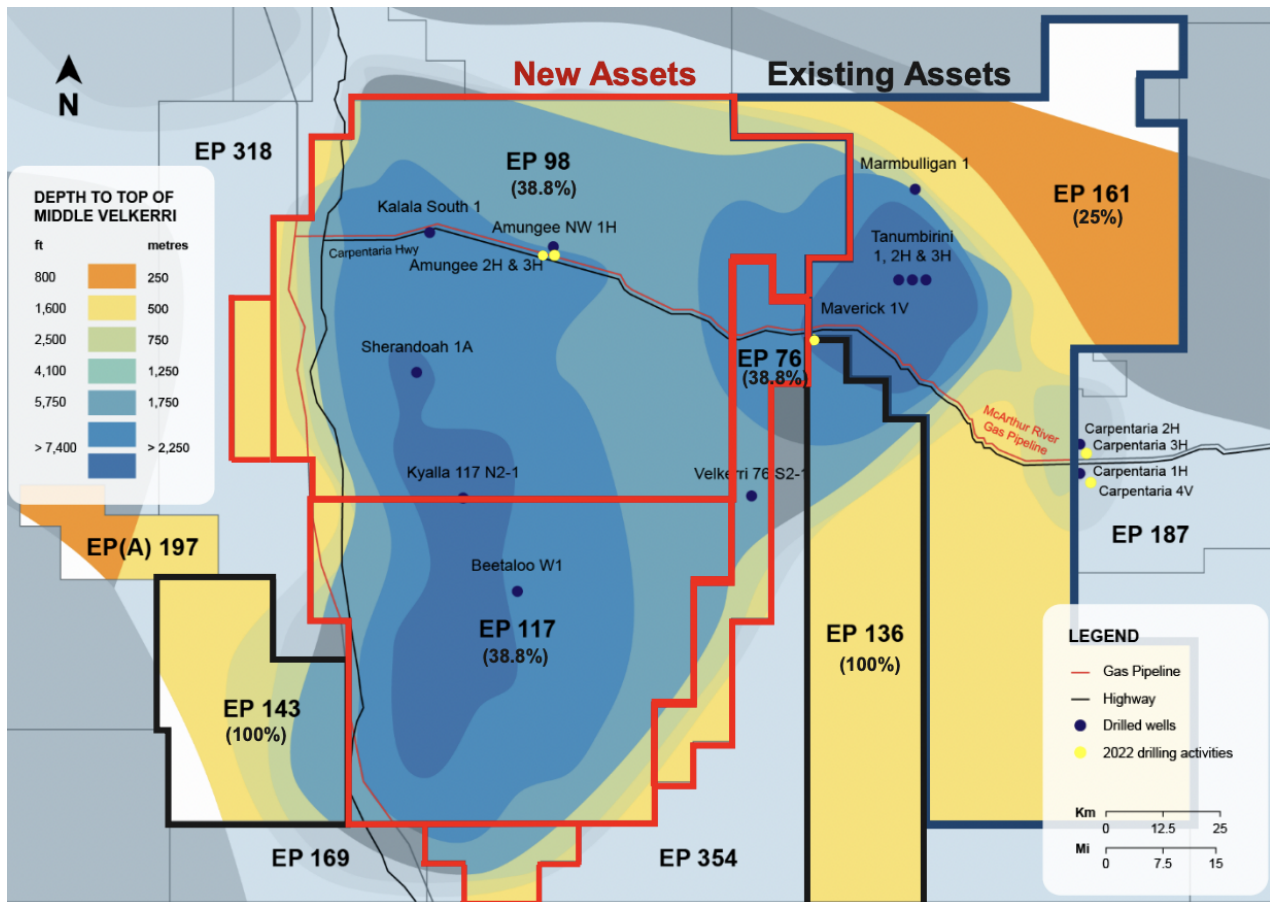


Adrian Tomlinson  
Chief Executive Officer  
Arid Lands Environment Centre



Lucy Manne  
Chief Executive Officer  
350.org Australia

## Appendix A – Tamboran Resources exploration permits<sup>14</sup>



### EP 76

- Formerly Origin, now 38.75% Tamboran, 38.75% Bryan Sheffield, 17.5% Falcon
- Existing Velkerri well

### EP 98

- Formerly Origin, now 38.75% Tamboran, 38.75% Bryan Sheffield, 17.5% Falcon
- Existing Kalala South 1, Amungee NW 1H, and Shenandoah 1A wells
- New Amungee 2H, 3H wells, planning to drill in October 2022
- Indicated they'll start there and then plan more drills south of that towards EP 117

### EP 117

- Formerly Origin, now 38.75% Tamboran, 38.75% Bryan Sheffield, 17.5% Falcon
- Existing Beetaloo W1 and Kyalla 117 wells

<sup>14</sup> Acquisition of Origin Energy's Beetaloo Basin Assets and Equity Raising, Tamboran Resources, 20 September 2022.

EP 136

- 100% Sweetpea
- Funded by Bryan Sheffield
- New Maverick IV well

EP 143

- 100% Sweetpea
- No wells yet

EP 161

- 25% Tamboran, 75% Santos
- Existing Tanumbirini 1, 2H, 3H wells

EP 197 (A)

- 100% Sweetpea
- No wells yet

## Appendix B – Estimated impacts of Helmerick & Payne’s Rig 469

Tamboran Resources says its proposed “US-style” 3km+ horizontal wells will involve around 60 frack ‘stages’ per well, compared to current approved Beetaloo wells at around 20 stages per well. According to the approved Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for the EP98 Amungee 2H/3H wells, submitted by Origin Energy (prior to selling its Beetaloo interests to Tamboran Resources), these 1km/20 stage frack wells would require:

- “It is anticipated that approximately 1.5ML of water and 180-250 tonnes of proppant (sand) will be used for each stage. This equals an approximate volume of 40 ML of water and between 2,700-7,500 tonnes of sand per exploration and appraisal (E&A) well. Water will be sourced from the Gum Ridge Formation, as described in section 3.12. Proppant will be sourced from locations within Australia (such as South Australia) or imported from international sources. (EMP, p. 72)
- “5 ML of water per E&A well for drilling” (EMP, p. 92)
- Chemical cocktail volumes (EMP, p 82-85, Table 16):
  - ~ 230,000 litres of mixed chemical fluid per well, including biocides, corrosion inhibitors, surfactants, scale inhibitors, acids and friction reducers;
  - ~ 477 tonnes of other chemical additives per well, including breakers, cross-linkers, oxygen scavengers, lubricants, formation inhibitors, drilling fluids, and viscosity increasers.

Table 1: Estimated use of water, sand, and chemicals based on existing EMP

Estimated result of use of Tamboran’s super-fracker in Beetaloo	Approved frack wells (per well)	Tamboran super-fracker wells (per well)
Water	40,000,000 litres (fracking) + 5,000,000 litres (drilling)	<b>120,000,000 litres</b> (fracking) + <b>15,000,000 litres</b> (drilling)
Sand (‘proppant’)	2,700-7,500 tonnes	<b>8,100 – 22,500 tonnes</b>
Chemical cocktail	230,000 litres + 477 tonnes	<b>690,000 litres + 1,431 tonnes</b>

Other potential impacts (that also have not been assessed or approved) include:

- Significantly greater greenhouse gas emissions per well (to drill and frack wells three times longer);
- Significantly greater use of flaring and potential fugitive methane emissions due to greater amount of gas ‘accessed’ at each well;
- Significantly increased risk of well integrity failures due to longer wells intersecting faults and fractures and other geological anomalies, or experiencing seismic activity.



## Appendix C – Bryan Sheffield’s political donations<sup>15</sup>

Table 2: Political donations from Sharrol and Bryan S Sheffield in Texas

Amount (USD)	Recipient	Date	Associations	Associations cont.
\$5,000.00	Texas Oil and Gas Association Good Government Committee	05/09/2016	Conservative lobby groups	Oil and gas
\$2,500.00	Tom Craddick	10/11/2016	Republican Party	
\$10,000.00	Ryan Sitton	10/06/2017	Republican Party	Texas Railroad Commission
\$7,500.00	Wayne Christian	10/11/2017	Republican Party	Texas Railroad Commission
\$25,000.00	Greg Abbott	07/12/2017	Republican Party	Texas Governor
\$25,000.00	Christi Craddick	02/08/2018	Republican Party	
\$10,000.00	Kirk Watson	10/09/2018	Democratic Party	
\$2,500.00	Drew Darby	10/09/2018	Republican Party	
\$2,500.00	Four Price IV	10/09/2018	Republican Party	
\$10,000.00	George P Bush	10/09/2018	Republican Party	
\$2,500.00	Jacey Jetton	03/02/2020	Republican Party	
\$2,500.00	Brian Birdwell	03/03/2020	Republican Party	
\$2,500.00	Jeff Leach	04/03/2020	Republican Party	
\$2,500.00	Lyle Larson	03/04/2020	Republican Party	
\$2,500.00	Tom Craddick	03/06/2020	Republican Party	
\$2,500.00	Charles Perry	04/07/2020	Republican Party	
\$7,500.00	Christi Craddick	08/07/2020	Republican Party	
\$7,500.00	Wayne Christian	08/07/2020	Republican Party	Texas Railroad Commission
\$2,500.00	ActBlue Texas	07/09/2020	Other	Democratic Party NFP
\$1,000.00	Bryan Hughes	03/10/2020	Republican Party	

<sup>15</sup> Sharroll and Bryan S Sheffield, Transparency USA.

\$2,500.00	Chrysta Castaneda	07/10/2020	Democratic Party	Texas Railroad Commission
\$500.00	Abel Herrero	02/11/2020	Democratic Party	
\$1,000.00	Terry Canales	02/11/2020	Democratic Party	
\$1,000.00	Pete Flores	02/11/2020	Republican Party	
\$1,000.00	Kelly Hancock	03/11/2020	Republican Party	
\$500,000.00	Texans for Lawsuit Reform PAC	03/10/2022	Conservative lobby groups	Law reform
\$2,500.00	George P Bush	01/23/2018	Republican Party	
\$10,000.00	Texas Oil and Gas Association Good Government Committee	02/23/2018	Conservative lobby groups	Oil and gas
\$1,000.00	Chuy Hinojosa	02/26/2020	Democratic Party	
\$1,000.00	Brooks Frederick Landgraf	02/26/2020	Republican Party	
\$2,500.00	Chris Paddie	02/26/2020	Republican Party	
\$2,500.00	Matt Shaheen	03/23/2020	Republican Party	
\$2,500.00	Angie Chen Button	03/27/2020	Republican Party	
\$2,500.00	Drew Darby	03/27/2020	Republican Party	
\$2,500.00	Sarah Davis	03/30/2020	Republican Party	
\$25,000.00	Ellen Troxclair	04/13/2022	Republican Party	
\$5,000.00	Christi Craddick	04/19/2016	Republican Party	
\$500.00	Mary Ann Perez	04/23/2020	Democratic Party	
\$1,000.00	Kel Seliger	05/18/2020	Republican Party	
\$2,500.00	The Real Estate Council of Austin, Inc. Good Government PAC	06/14/2018	Conservative lobby groups	Real estate
\$15,000.00	Christi Craddick	06/21/2017	Republican Party	
\$25,000.00	Greg Abbott	06/22/2022	Republican Party	Texas Governor
\$2,500.00	Wayne Christian	06/27/2017	Republican Party	Texas Railroad Commission
\$100,000.00	Greg Abbott	06/29/2021	Republican Party	Texas Governor

\$5,000.00	George P Bush	06/30/2017	Republican Party	
\$1,000.00	Christi Craddick	07/23/2015	Republican Party	
\$5,000.00	Chrysta Castaneda	07/31/2020	Democratic Party	Texas Railroad Commission
\$5,000.00	ActBlue Texas	07/31/2020	Other	Democratic Party NFP
\$5,000.00	Christi Craddick	08/22/2016	Republican Party	
\$5,000.00	Christi Craddick	08/23/2016	Republican Party	
\$5,000.00	Jimmy Blacklock	09/14/2018	Republican Party	
\$10,000.00	Greg Abbott	09/19/2016	Republican Party	Texas Governor
\$1,000.00	George P Bush	10/14/2016	Republican Party	
\$25,000.00	Greg Abbott	10/15/2018	Republican Party	Texas Governor
\$25,000.00	Republican Party of Texas	10/17/2018	Republican Party	
\$2,500.00	Abel Herrero	10/26/2017	Democratic Party	
\$2,500.00	Wayne Christian	10/27/2016	Republican Party	Texas Railroad Commission
\$10,000.00	Ryan Sitton	11/30/2016	Republican Party	Texas Railroad Commission
\$5,000.00	SafeTX Political Action Committee	12/14/2020	Conservative lobby groups	Pro police
\$10,000.00	Texas Oil and Gas Association Good Government Committee	12/15/2015	Conservative lobby groups	Oil and gas
\$17,500.00	George P Bush	Bush, George P. (The Honorable)	Republican Party	
\$25,000.00	Christi Craddick	Craddick, Christi L. (The Honorable)	Republican Party	
\$5,000.00	Will Franklin Jr	Franklin Jr., Jack William (Mr.)	Republican Party	

*Table 3: Total political donations from Sharoll and Bryan Sheffield*

<i>Recipient</i>	<i>Total received (USD)</i>
Conservative lobby groups	\$532,500.00
Republican Party	\$449,500.00
Democratic Party	\$23,000.00
Other	\$7,500.00
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$1,012,500.00</b>

## **Appendix D – Tamboran Resources Board and Executive background<sup>16</sup>**

### **Mr Dick Stoneburner**

Chairman

- On Board since April 2016
- Currently Executive Advisor for Pine Brook Partners
- Former roles
  - Co-founder, President, and COO of Petrohawk Energy Corporation
  - President of North America Shale Production Division for BHP Billiton Petroleum 2011-2012
  - Executive Vice President Exploration for 3TEC Energy Corporation
  - Hugoton Energy Corporation
  - Stoneburner Exploration Inc.
  - Weber Energy
  - Texas Oil & Gas

### **Mr Joel Riddle**

CEO & Managing Director

- CEO since 2013
- Managing Director since 2018
- Former roles
  - Vice President, Commercial and Planning at Cobalt International Energy
    - Was involved here in Gulf of Mexico and West Africa exploration strategies

<sup>16</sup> 2022 Annual Report, Tamboran Resources, September 2022.

- Included capital raising efforts in 2009, 2010, and 2011 (note that the devastating events at Deepwater Horizon occurred in April 2010)
- Unocal Corporation 2002–2005
- Murphy Oil Corporation 2005–2008
- ExxonMobil starting 1997, including operations work in Gulf of Mexico

### **Mr Fred Barrett**

Director (non-Executive)

- Board member since April 2016, but was an independent Director since September 2014, so was with Tamboran Resources during the unapproved excavating and blasting in Northern Ireland.
- Former roles
  - Independent Non-Executive Director on the Board of Asian American Gas (AAG) Energy Holdings
  - Advisory panel and steering committee at Santos Ltd 2014 - 2015
  - Various positions at Bill Barrett Corporation, exploration and production company focused on oil and gas activities in the Rocky Mountain region
  - Co-Founder and Partner in Terred Oil Company

### **Mr Dan Chandra**

Director (non-Executive)

- Board member since March 2019
- Currently a Partner and Portfolio Manager at Clear Sky Advisers, an ESG-focused fund based in Houston and New York.
- Former roles
  - Lion Point Capital
  - DW Partners

### **Ms. Ann Diamant**

Director (non-Executive)

- Board member since March 2021
- Joined ASX listed Oil Search Limited in 2003 and was responsible for developing and implementing Oil Search Limited's highly regarded investor relations strategy.
- Currently SVP Communications and Investor Relations at Karoon Energy Limited
- Worked in investment banking prior to this

### **Mr Patrick Elliot**

Director (non-Executive)

- Founding shareholder, joined Board in February 2009, so was with Tamboran Resources during the unapproved excavating and blasting in Northern Ireland.

- Stepped down as Chairman in November 2020
- Former roles
  - Director of Sapex Limited which is involved in oil and gas exploration in the Arckaringa Basin, South Australia
  - Director of Eastern Star Gas Limited, which was involved in coal seam gas exploration and evaluation
  - Director Loneer Limited
- Currently also director of
  - Cap-XX Limited
  - Argonaut Resources NL (Commenced 30 June 2003)
  - Kirrama Resources Limited
  - Rockfire Resources PLC
  - Former directorships (last 3 years): Loneer Limited (retired 30 November 2020)

### **Mr David Siegel**

Director (non-Executive)

- Joined the Board in March 2021
- Chairman and substantial shareholder of Longview
- Senior Advisor to Apollo Global Management and Chairman of two Apollo portfolio companies, Sun Country Airlines and Volotea, S.A
- Former roles
  - CEO AWAS
  - CEO Frontier Airlines
  - CEO XOJET Inc
  - CEO Avis Budget Group Inc.
  - CEO Continental Express Airlines
  - CEO US Airways Group Inc.
  - CEO Gategroup A.G.

### **Mr Faron Thibodeaux**

Chief Operating Officer

- Previously served as Senior Vice President for Global Drilling, Completions and Production Engineering at Apache Corporation, with a background of having drilled more than 5,000 unconventional horizontal shale wells in North America.

### **Dr David Close**

Vice President of Operations and External Affairs

- Formerly served at both Origin Energy and Santos, with a focus on their Beetaloo Basin assets.