



Hon Bill Johnston
Minister for Mines and Petroleum; Commerce and Industrial Relations;
Electoral Affairs; Asian Engagement

Our Ref: 71-08821
Your Ref: Petition No. 086

Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
WEST PERTH WA 6005
Lcco@parliament.wa.gov.au


Dear Chair

Thank you for your correspondence of 21 November 2018 regarding the petition from Ms Jane Hammond calling for a ban on hydraulic fracture stimulation (fracking) in Western Australia (the Petition).

The State Government is committed to a scientific approach to fracking. The Government went to great care to establish an Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry that was capable of providing the best advice to the Government, in an impartial and scientifically robust manner. The Government imposed a moratorium on fracking while the Inquiry was undertaken.

As you and the Standing Committee may be aware, on 27 November 2018 the State Government provided its response to the Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry's Report. The Report's findings 'support a broad conclusion that the international standards for the design, construction and operation of an individual petroleum well (incorporating hydraulic fracture stimulation) if properly executed and located, generally limit risks to the environment and people to a low level'.¹

The State Government has accepted the Report's 44 recommendations. Additionally, the Government has adopted further strict controls, including:

- The fracking moratorium will only be lifted on existing petroleum titles.
- The ban on fracking in the South West, Peel and Perth metropolitan regions will continue.
- Fracking will not be permitted in National parks, the Dampier Peninsula and within 2 kilometres of public drinking water source areas.
- The consent of Traditional Owners and farmers will be required for fracking production.
- The former Government's royalty discount will be removed and net royalties will be used to fund renewable energy projects.

The Petition raises particular issue that 'there is growing-peer reviewed scientific evidence that fracking cannot be done without the risk to human health, climate stability, water quality, air quality and the environment'. I am pleased to advise that these issues were considered by the Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry and covered in detail in its Report.

¹ Dr Tom Hatton et al, *Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation in Western Australia*, Final Report to the Western Australian Government (September 2018) 48.
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In particular, the Inquiry report found that the impacts on global climate as a consequence of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from an industry based on fracking is directly linked to the scale of the development; and that it is likely oil and gas projects will emit more GHG per unit of production, but only to a limited degree. In addition to limiting areas in the State available for fracking, introducing mitigation measures to reduce fugitive emissions from fracking and carbon offsets, the potential emissions from this activity are unlikely to approach the magnitude of those emissions stated in the petition.

The issue raised by the petitioner that the panel did not include a medical scientist ignores the fact that the panel did include a highly qualified and experienced expert in public health, ecological risk assessment and toxicology. Consequently, a number of findings and recommendations in the Inquiry's final report directly address issues of reducing and mitigating risks to public health from fracking related activities.

Finally, I would also like to note that the State Government has committed any net royalties received from unconventional onshore petroleum projects be provided to a clean energy fund to support clean energy developments in Western Australia. This is a sensible decision made by the State Government that could greatly assist Western Australia to transition to a low emissions economy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bill Johnston', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Hon Bill Johnston MLA
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Commerce and Industrial Relations;
Electoral Affairs; Asian Engagement**

11 DEC 2018