



Origin Energy will sell its stake in its Beetaloo Basin gas project and review all its other exploration permits.

Ditch fracking to protect our health

“It is time we stopped being at the mercy of big business”

BROOKE AH SHAY

THIS week's news of Origin Energy's divestment from the Beetaloo Basin has garnered much attention and for good reason: it is time for everyone to recognise that fracking has no place in the Northern Territory's future (or Australia's for that matter), and that the project finally be laid to rest.

As a GP, I echo the concerns voiced by doctors around the world about the health risks posed by fracking.

Fracking uses many pollutant chemicals. Many of the chemicals found in shale gas wastewater have not been evaluated, are known carcinogens (that is, substances capable of causing cancer) and have the potential to cause harm.

They can do this by impacting local water supplies and from air pollution.

There is also mounting evidence in the United States, which has a long history of gas mining, of associations between nearby gas projects and health issues such as negative birth outcomes, asthma, and some cancers.

It is the absence of data on many of the chemicals used that is especially concerning. Protecting

public health means taking a precautionary approach when all the facts are not yet known.

Detractors will no doubt say what is always said here: any risks will be mitigated by strict regulation.

I imagine they are referring to the same kind of strict regulation that has led to some mining companies across Australia continuing to get away with the most appalling of failures in their practices, such as the McArthur River mine contaminating nearby cattle and fish, or the spilling of tonnes of toxic substances onto roads in the past few years, or the now shut down Redbank copper mine, that allowed poisoned waters to bleed into local waterways.

Fracking's contribution to climate change is another reason to be alarmed, and the reason why it has been banned in many countries already.

Fracking of the Basin has previously been described as a "climate bomb", and could increase Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by a whopping 13 per cent from 2020 emissions.

The Northern Territory's vulnerability to climate change should have Territorians

particularly concerned.

The two summers of 2018-2020 were the hottest on record for the NT.

Climate change affects health in various ways, such as by increasing heat-related illnesses and complications of pre-existing illnesses, increasing the likelihood of extreme weather events such as bushfires, cyclones, and droughts, increasing mosquito-borne illnesses, and affecting food systems.

It is also predicted to affect the recruitment of doctors and other professionals to the Territory, an issue that the NT already struggles significantly with.

It is important to remember that, like so many mining activities around the country, fracking the Beetaloo Basin will disproportionately affect the people of the nearby Aboriginal communities (who must be strongly commended for their effective grassroots advocacy against this project).

We know that First Nations people have worse health outcomes than non-First Nations Australians, and anything that has the potential to further exacerbate this must be avoided at all costs.

Thrill of the hunt hard to top

BART IRWIN

HUNTING, for most people these days, is not subsistence hunting. Not a life-and-death situation.

Will I be able to feed the clan? The joy of hunting is hard to put into words that a non-hunter would appreciate.

Hunters hear the call of the geese and the whistling of wings overhead in the darkness.

Then witness the daily glory of the of a red, turning to golden sunrise. My most memorable morning was when I once witnessed all this with the addition of lightning crawling across the western sky.

Then the first skeins of geese and flocks of ducks become visible. The art of calling them in to the decoys is a skill that few master and have the knowledge of when to stop calling.

It's a bit like Kenny Rogers once said, "You have to know when to hold 'em, and know when to fold 'em."

Then, after a couple of well-placed shots, Duke springs forth on command to fetch, first the furthest bird, then the closer one.

A good pat and rub behind the ear and he is beyond eager to repeat the most fun a Labrador can have in his usually dreary life of waiting until I get home and take him for a walk.

Hunting is almost that recreational indulgent luxury and the statistics show that the average of waterfowl hunting trips is four times per season and the average bag is 4.5 geese.

I feel sorry for those that hunt fewer than five times per season, but I understand it.

And so is the success of the hunt made up with people who bag more than four birds and we all have days that are completely unproductive or less than expectations. And expectation is one of the great drivers of hunting, and fishing for that matter.

All who hunt and fish spend time anticipating the upcoming adventure and picturing themselves pulling off spectacular shots or landing a monster barra.

But hunting and fishing are expensive past times and ways to provide food.

Therefore, it is imperative that governments maintain a worthy incentive that will still ensure sustainable populations.

Now, even more, with diesel over \$2 a litre and beef and lamb averaging \$50 a kilo a hunting trip needs to be successful.

Thanks to Minister Moss the seven-geese limit allows that people can dream of having a red-letter day and bagging out during the four month season, just as fishermen can every day of the year.

NT Field and Game will be holding clay target practice every Friday from 4pm and Sunday Mass today from 9am until noon.

Members will be there to give hunting and shooting tips to all who visit. All welcome.

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