



Date: 18th October 2023

Attn:

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2500

The Hon Tanya Plibersek
Minister for Environment and Water
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2500

Dear Prime Minister Albanese and Minister Plibersek,

I write, as executive director of Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) to request an immediate extension of the water trigger in the EPBC Act to include ***shale and tight gas fracking***.

DEA applauds Labors pre-election commitment to do this and commends you for your Nature Positive Plan (Dec 2022) and the assurances stated therein:-

“The existing water trigger will be expanded to include all forms of unconventional gas (e.g. shale and tight gas). Decisions will be supported by independent expert advice, ensuring the environmental and water impacts of these proposed developments are managed...”

However, we are concerned that whilst this Plan was released almost a year ago, the changes to the EPBC act have not yet occurred. Our understanding is that the EPBC act is scheduled to be reviewed in 2024, which will be too late for the Beetaloo Basin and those that live there.

We urge you to support the private members bills to expand the water trigger put forward in the House of Representatives by Dr Sophie Scamps and in the Senate by Sarah Hanson-Young, noting that they are consistent with the government's previously stated position.

Shale gas fracking of the Beetaloo Basin will cause [significant health harms](#) from local pollution. The water will be contaminated by poisonous toxins including heavy metals, volatile organic compounds and many others, with this pollution impacting on the health of local populations.

Shale gas fracking is highly water intensive and to allow it in an area of pre-existing water insecurity, like the Beetaloo Basin is foolhardy and irresponsible. Further depleted water supply will endanger health and increase the risk of renal failure and heat related illness. It will also impact fauna, threatening their survival and undermining local biodiversity.

The [First Nations communities of the Beetaloo Basin](#), do not want their country and water poisoned by fracking and Labor amending the act now would show your respect for these people and demonstrate that you are listening to their voice.

Beetaloo if fully developed will cause up to [117 million tonnes of Co2eq annually](#), further fueling global heating and for this alone, any avenue to avert this project should be pursued assiduously.

Global heating already impacts the health of the Australian people, with extreme weather events, heatwaves, bushfires and mental health effects causing death and ill-health and putting pressure on our already over stretched health services.

Our coal and gas exports are adding to the global health burden from climate change and any expansion of this industry takes us further away from our commitments under the Paris Agreement.

There is no time to delay. Exploratory fracking has already started in the NT's Beetaloo Basin, and production approvals by the NT government are likely to be given very soon.

DEA requests that Labor amends the EPBC before Parliament breaks for Christmas 2023 and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further in person.

Yours sincerely



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