

Joint Statement of scientists and experts responding to the WA Government's fracking Inquiry and decision to lift the Fracking Moratorium

December 2018

Dear Premier and Ministers of the Government of Western Australia

In September 2018 we wrote to you regarding the climate risks and impacts of allowing fracking in Western Australia.

We noted that unconventional gas resources in Western Australia are one of the largest unexploited potential sources of carbon in the world.¹ Opening these to exploitation would, in our view, be grossly irresponsible given the urgency of the climate situation.

We understand that you have nevertheless recently announced that Western Australia's unconventional gas resources will be opened for development by fracking, based on the report of your Independent Fracking Inquiry.

We strongly reject the conclusions and recommendations of that report as they relate to carbon pollution and climate change impacts associated with fracking. In our view, the report has seriously underestimated the potential carbon pollution from fracking in WA. Some of the limitations and shortcomings in this report include:

- The report has ignored pollution that would result from combustion of the fracked gas (the largest source of pollution from fracking) which is likely to account for up to 80% of the pollution from fracking.
- The report has assumed that the size and scale of the gas fracking industry would be small (for the WA gas market only), and therefore would cause a small amount of pollution. In contrast, the WA Government's official published estimates of 'economically recoverable resource' are much larger, and Premier

¹ EIA (2013) Technically Recoverable Shale Oil and Shale Gas Resources: An Assessment of 137 Shale Formations in 41 Countries Outside the United States,

<https://www.eia.gov/analysis/studies/worldshalegas/pdf/overview.pdf>

Government of Western Australia (2016), Invest in the West, oil and gas in Western Australia, https://www.jtsi.wa.gov.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/invest_in_the_west-oil_-amp-_gas_opportunities_in_western_australia_4pg_brochure_0515.pdf?sfvrsn=e0746b1c_27

Mark McGowan has said fracking could be “..a very significant industry for Western Australia that could generate billions of dollars of royalties for the state”² We agree that real potential exists for a very large gas export industry from fracking in WA however the inquiry has not assessed the potential pollution from such an industry.

- The report has assumed that gas fracking will result in less conventional gas being developed in WA, and therefore only the marginal increase in pollution should be considered. This assumption is not supported by evidence, and it is not credible to suggest existing gas producers will voluntarily limit production if fracking occurs.

Given the above limitations on the Inquiry’s assessment of carbon pollution from fracking, we do not believe its findings can be relied upon when assessing the risks of fracking or making policy on this issue.

We reiterate our call on you and your government to place a permanent state-wide ban on fracking in WA, in order to prevent very significant additional carbon pollution and climate change impacts.

Signed –

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² Premier Mark McGowan on ABC radio November 28, 2018

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Former senior executive Royal Dutch Shell; former Chairman of the Australian Coal Association; former CEO of the Australian Institute of Company Directors; chairman the original Australian Government Greenhouse Office Experts Group on Emissions Trading

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