

COMMUNIQUE

Meeting Five, Wednesday 28 August 2019, Darwin, Northern Territory

Purpose of the meeting:

The purpose of the meeting was to provide an update on progress of implementing the recommendations from the *Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory*, a briefing on baseline methane monitoring and groundwater characteristics of the Beetaloo Sub-basin, an update on delivery of Strategic Regional Environmental Baseline and Assessments (SREBA) and progress to support NT businesses to benefit from the development of the onshore gas industry.

Fifth meeting of the Community and Business Reference Group:

- The Community and Business Reference Group (the Reference Group), held its fifth meeting on 28 August 2019 in Darwin.

Methane and Groundwater Monitoring undertaken in the Beetaloo Sub-basin

- A presentation was provided to the Reference Group by CSIRO on studies into baseline methane emissions and groundwater characteristics undertaken to date in the Beetaloo Sub-basin
- The Reference Group noted the following in relation to the work undertaken by CSIRO:
 - The Beetaloo Sub-basin extends across a number of ecosystems with limited sources of methane emissions and disruption of groundwater evident from the initial studies undertaken by CSIRO.
 - Further baseline studies of the Beetaloo Sub-basin will be determined by the scope of work that will be delivered through the SREBA for the Beetaloo Sub-basin which will seek to leverage the initial studies undertaken by CSIRO.

Progress and Reporting

- A presentation was provided to the Reference Group by the Hydraulic Fracturing Inquiry Implementation Taskforce on the implementation of recommendations from the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing Implementation Plan.
- It was noted that implementation has now been underway for more than a year and all of the 31 recommendations requiring implementation before exploration drilling and hydraulic fracturing could occur have now been implemented. As at the end of August 2019, 54 of the 135 recommendations have been fully implemented and a further 73 have been commenced.
- The Reference Group provided the following feedback in relation to the Northern Territory's Reserved Block Policy (No Go Zones):
 - Some members of the CBRG expressed concern about the consultation process undertaken to finalise the no-go zones policy, and whether the policy reflected the intent of the no-go zones recommendation. The main concern expressed was the criteria applied in order to determine what areas were included in the policy.

- The CBRG acknowledged the public comment period undertaken for the establishment of the no go zone policy.
- Members of the Reference Group suggested that greater clarity on the process for the Government going forward would be beneficial, including whether areas could be nominated or removed as reserved blocks as new information comes to light or circumstances change.
- The Reference Group felt that it was important that these issues be clarified by Government to provide certainty for industry, investment decisions and the broader community.
- It was agreed that progress updates on implementation of the policy should remain on the agenda going forward.
- The Reference Group noted the July 2019 progress update on Hydraulic Fracturing Implementation was recently finalised with the following key priorities to be progressed over 2019-20:
 - Completion of the framework with guidance notes for undertaking a Strategic and Regional Environmental Baseline Assessment (SREBA);
 - Development of the Aboriginal Information Program, which includes consideration of interpreter services;
 - Land release for exploration; and
 - Ensuring local opportunities and benefits for Territorians.
- It was noted that in future the status of recommendations will be updated online as soon as they are completed.

Update on Public Comment on Environment Management Plans (EMPs)

- A representative of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) provided a briefing on the public comment process for EMPs
- The Reference Group noted the following advice from DENR:
 - EMPs may be updated after a public comment process to incorporate comments received, however if an EMP was modified where it results in a material change to the activity, a new EMP would then be required to be released for public comment.
 - Proponents may submit separate EMPs for different activities such as civil works, drilling and fracking; all of which will undergo separate public comment processes. Moving forward DENR will encourage proponents to include a broader range of activities in a single EMP.
 - DENR is currently preparing a policy document to outline the processes to be followed in the administration of the public comment process. The document will be released publicly and will be regularly updated.

SREBA Framework

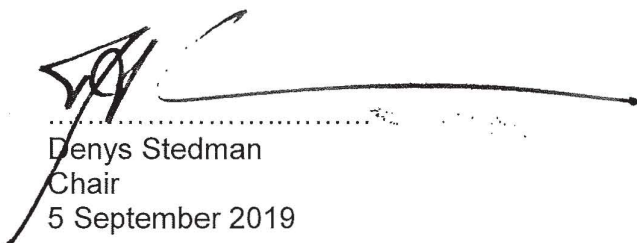
- A presentation was provided to the Reference Group by the Hydraulic Fracturing Inquiry Implementation Taskforce on the development of the SREBA Framework.
- The full SREBA framework is still currently being developed and the CBRG noted the following:
 - The SREBA Framework will comprise of an overarching document that addresses governance and delivery responsibilities, and six guidance notes addressing terrestrial ecosystems, aquatic dependent ecosystems, water quality and quantity, greenhouse gases, public health, and social, cultural and economic factors.

Local Content

- A representative of the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation (DTBI) provided an update on key actions currently underway to support industry development, and position NT businesses to benefit from development of the onshore gas industry.
- The Reference Group noted that DTBI is currently undertaking:
 - A study into the infrastructure and logistics required to support development of the onshore industry;
 - A study to map existing industry capabilities and what work is being delivered by local firms and joint ventures to support the development of the offshore industry;
 - Initial planning for an NT Oil and Gas Service and Supply Strategy and Action Plan to identify and build local capability, strengthen local procurement strategies, workforce capability and local participation
- Members of the Reference Group provided the following feedback:
 - there are difficulties in identifying criteria for what constitutes a local business and learnings from the Inpex experience need to be considered to maximise benefit for the NT in developing the onshore gas industry.
 - a further update from the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation at the next meeting was welcomed by the CBRG.

Next Meeting

The Reference Group agreed the next meeting to be scheduled for 13 November 2019.



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Denys Stedman
Chair

5 September 2019