

## COMMUNIQUE

Meeting Seven, Tuesday 2 June 2020, Darwin, Northern Territory

### **Purpose of the meeting:**

The purpose of the meeting was to provide an update on the progress of implementing the recommendations from the *Scientific Inquiry into the Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory* (the Inquiry) from 01 November 2019 to 30 April 2020 and the targeted engagement approach for Stage 3 of implementation.

### **Seventh meeting of the Community and Business Reference Group:**

- The Community and Business Reference Group (the CBRG), held its seventh meeting on 2 June 2020 in Darwin.

### **Progress and Reporting**

- A presentation was provided by DCM on the current status of progress of recommendations from the Inquiry, noting that significant progress on implementing recommendations has been made, with some delays where on-country engagement is required due to COVID-19 restrictions in place.

### **SREBA Framework, Offsets Policy and Environment Management Plans (EMPs)**

- Representatives from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) provided an update on the SREBA, the status of the Offsets policy and Environmental Management Plans (EMPs).
- The Reference Group was briefed regarding the outcomes from public consultation for the draft SREBA Framework and DENR confirmed a regional reference group will be established to provide advice and local knowledge to the development of the SREBA in the Beetaloo Sub-Basin.
- The group discussed the importance of Aboriginal participation across the SREBA studies, and the linkages between the studies that will be coordinated by DENR and through the scopes of works.
- The CBRG noted that the Draft Offsets Policy related to *Environment Protection Act 2019* (EP Act) was released for public comment at the end of last year.
- Some members asked about the timing of the delivery of the Offsets Framework and policies. The CBRG was advised that the EP Act commences on 28 June 2020 and the broad Offsets Framework and Principles document will follow shortly thereafter. Work is continuing on developing individual, targeted biodiversity and greenhouse gas offset policy documents, with the biodiversity offset policy progressing as a priority and due to be finalised by December 2020.
- The CBRG was updated on:
  - The Environmental Management Plan (EMP) assessment process.
  - The number of EMPs assessed (which is provided on the DENR website).
  - The increase in DENR's compliance monitoring capacity.
  - Environmental security and land access regulatory progress.

### **Land Access and Reserved Block Policy**

- A representative of the Department of Primary Industry and Resources (DPIR) provided an update on land access and the implementation of the Reserved Block Policy.
- The CBRG was updated on:

- The *Petroleum Legislation Miscellaneous Amendments Act 2020* was assented to in March 2020 and will commence in June. Draft regulations are currently being developed and will include land access agreements which are intended to implement Recommendation 14.6 and 14.7 of the Inquiry.
- A land access agreement must contain 24 minimum provisions.

### **Local Content, Supporting the Onshore Gas Support Industry, and Supporting Aboriginal Businesses**

- A representative of the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation (DTBI) provided an update on the development of the Gas Service and Supply Plan, including actions to grow the service and supply industry, and grow Territory research and innovation and training. Details were provided of research by the Industry Capability Network (ICN) and the Northern Territory Government on optimising opportunities for onshore gas development including optimising opportunities for Aboriginal Businesses. DTBI advised that the supply plan's goal is to achieve a 50% local participation by the gas industry in the Territory by 2025, which has the potential to contribute an additional \$1 Billion to the NT economy over the next 10 years.
- The CBRG noted:
  - DTBI has completed substantial work on its supply plan and was already implementing related actions arising around three key areas. 1. Strengthening the commitment to local content by gas operators and contractors; 2. Growing the local workforce and business capability; and 3. Developing the Territory's service and supply chain.
  - DTBI is supporting business programs, training programs and projects.
  - A number of Working Groups had been established to implement actions to leverage the economic opportunities provided by the onshore gas sector.
- One member of the CBRG noted that it was very important for the Territory to maximise its benefits given the current economic challenges.

### **Aboriginal Information Program**

- A representative from the Department of Chief Minister (DCM) provided details on the Aboriginal Information Program (including recommendation 11.5, the use of translators)
- The CBRG noted:
  - Stage one of the package has been drafted by CSIRO and is with the working group for review.
  - While some progress has slowed by COVID-19, work has progressed online. Testing of the draft package content for cultural and content appropriateness will take place once draft content has been finalised.

### **Independent Oversight of Implementation**

- A copy of a letter from Dr Ritchie to the Chief Minister outlining the NT Government's progress of implementing Inquiry recommendations was circulated to the CBRG before the meeting.
- The CBRG was advised that Dr Ritchie's term has been extended until 31 December 2021.

### **CBRG Term**

- The Chair noted that the term of the CBRG was due to conclude on the 30 June 2020, having already been extended from its original term by one year.

- DCM provided details on the proposed mechanisms and targeted stakeholder engagement and oversight in place for the subsequent execution of stage 3 of the implementation framework including:
  - the extension of the term of the Independent Overseer, Dr Ritchie;
  - the Aboriginal Information Program Working Group with membership from Land Councils, AAPA and APEA;
  - Regional Reference Group to provide advice on the implementation of the SREBA studies,
  - Direct and regular local content and business sector updates;
  - Ongoing public reporting through the website progress updates and community bulletins;
  - Senior government officers' willingness to update not only members of the CBRG but the broader community on specific matters and targeted engagement.
- The CBRG discussed at length its tenure and felt unanimously that its work had not reached a point where the group felt it was complete in accordance with the intent of recommendation 16.4. The CBRG membership agreed that a request should be made to the Chief Minister to extend its term till 31 December 2020
- The Chair agreed he would, on behalf of the membership, write to the Chief Minister requesting he consider extending the CBRG term for a further 6 months till 31 December 2020.