

Fracking : Labor = Liberal, do they have equal environmental values, besides climate change denial?

Below the text that was emailed to all WA Labor parliamentarians in November 2018

Why this subject title? Soon the WA government is going to make a decision on the recommendations by *Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation in Western Australia 2017*. Therefore I am asking you, please do not handball this email to the minister responsible to make the decision for you. You have the obligation to inform yourself as much as about the subject possible, otherwise you will have failed the principle of **Duty of Care** in relation to the citizens of WA you represent. If you are in favour of lifting the ban on fracking you will be telling WA's citizens that the Labor Party is environmentally equal to the Liberal Party. That should not be the stance of a party that claims to look after the people. Is Labor a party where the well-being of people is in the centre of the focus or is it big business?

Question: Are gas companies sure fracking is safe?

Answer : If the answer is Yes, the gas companies should require by law take out commercial insurance against the minuscule environmental risks (in their view, but not in the view of experts) for the next 30 years. The gas companies will have no objection in paying that small insurance premium, which will be minuscule since the risks are so small according to them.

As an analogy ask yourself "Would I fly in a plane if only 3% of the engineers say it is safe to do so?" It is all about risk management. If not nearly 100% sure if it is safe, just do not do it, you otherwise would play with other people's lives.

You may already have seen the arguments below, but give anyway them to you again.

Recently the report of the *Independent Scientific Panel Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation in Western Australia 2017* (attached my own submission) was handed over to the government. Due to the narrowness of the terms of reference I am worried that some non-technical issues that will have the greatest impact on the community are not taken into consideration. The Labor government used to have a Social Impact Unit, which was abolished by the Court Government, to assess the social impacts of proposed developments and projects. This process should be re-established in general, but in particular in the case of fracking.

Without doubt as a politician you consider the scientific evidence of the findings of the Inquiry, but you also have to take stock of the real benefit to society (taxpayer) at large and balance these two. The cost of externalities has to be included in the final decision making.

To illustrate this point about externalities let's have a look at the image below and ask a few questions.

Question : Why is an aerial image like below never included in the promotional materials of gas companies?



The image also highlights some of the externalities that are associated with the unconventional gas extraction industry. That are the costs that are born by the taxpayer and not by the business that have created them, in other words the unconventional gas extraction industry gets **subsidised**.

- Road & Pad building : Enormous areas needed for fracking operations.
 - Question : When are these surfaces restored to their original state and who pays for that work?
- Paddocks intersected by drill pads and their access roads.
 - This makes it more difficult for farmer to access all the paddocks which reduces efficiency.
 - Loss of farmland, resulting in less land for the farmer to use.
 - Question : How are the farmers compensated for reduced efficiency and loss of land and when? What is the impact on WA's food security and export income?
- Traffic : Increase traffic that service these operations.
 - Accidents on public roads leading to fracking sites.
 - Question : Cost of trauma. What are the effects on the local community if one of them is involved? Who pays for these accident related costs?
 - Public roads.
 - Question : who pays for the upkeep of these roads which wear out far more due to extra traffic?
 - Fuel : used by all equipment to build the road and pads and all the vehicles servicing the sites.
 - Question : Cost of CO2 emissions and other pollutants as well as the costs of the health effects on everyone.
- Ponds : these ponds contain many toxic pollutants.
 - Poisons Leaking from ponds due to punctured liner or over flow, polluting soil and aquifers, making them unfit for use.

- Question : Who does rehabilitate the pond, cleans up potential spills, compensates for killed wild life? When, and that is even 20 years after finishing the well?
 - Pump engines : to pump frack fluids down they need pumps powered by 40,000hp diesel engines. That is the size of a large industrial park.
 - Noise & Light Pollution from the 24/7 operations
 - Question : What are the short and long term health effects for all, both human and non-human animals, around? Who pays for these health costs?
 - Fuel : That means more than 175,000 liter of diesel a day with associated emissions.
 - Question : Cost of CO2 emissions and other pollutants. Who pays?

Question : How secure is the money promised for amongst other things the rehabilitation? Who holds this money in trust? Who will pay for it when the money is not set aside by the companies?

As elected members your first responsibility is to look after the citizens well-being. The companies wanting to extract resources need a social license to operate.

This is only a short list part of a long list of issues that affect the community caused by the fracking operations. These externalities cannot be pushed aside as collateral damage we have to accept in the name of “progress”. Therefore I urge you to take into account all the externalities in regarding to fracking. I expect that the government will not lift the moratorium on fracking and hopefully will install a ban on fracking.