

## ***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 emissions in the world.<sup>1</sup> 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 global warming 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

---

<sup>1</sup> 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](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”<sup>2</sup> 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 –**

**Professor Fiona Stanley AC, FAA, FASSA, FAAHMS**

Distinguished Research Professor, University of Western Australia; Australian of the Year 2003

**Professor Lesley Hughes**

Distinguished Professor of Biology Macquarie University; Climate Council Councillor

**Professor Hilary Bambrick**

Head of School, Public Health and Social Work, Queensland University of Technology

**Associate Professor Tilman Ruff AM, FRACP**

Nossal Institute for Global health, School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne

**Professor John Quiggin**

VC Senior Research Fellow, School of Economics, University of Queensland

**Professor Rick Cavicchioli**

Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences, University of NSW

**Professor Will Steffen**

Councillor, Climate Council; Climate Scientist, ANU

**Tim Forcey**

Energy Advisor; former Gas Principal AEMO; former engineer and manager Exxon, Esso BHP

**Adjunct Professor Peter Sainsbury**

Sydney Medical School, University of Notre Dame

---

<sup>2</sup> Premier Mark McGowan on ABC radio November 28, 2018

**Ian Dunlop**

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

**Dr Sue Wareham AOM**

President, Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia)

**Dr Luke Kemp**

Research Associate (Foresight), Centre for the Study of Existential Risk (CSER), Cambridge University

**Professor Ove Hoegh Guldberg**

Professor and Director, Global Change Institute, University of Queensland

**Alan Pears AM**

Senior Industry Fellow, RMIT University

**Professor John Church**

Climate Change Research Centre, University of New South Wales

**Professor Michael Ashley**

Department of Astrophysics, University of New South Wales

**Professor Ian Lowe**

Griffith University

**Fiona Armstrong**

Founder and Executive Director, Climate and Health Alliance; Westpac / Financial Review 100 Women of Influence (2016)

**Peter Dart**

Institute for Future Environments, Queensland University of Technology

**Dr David Holmes**

Director, Monash Climate Change Communication Research Hub

**Professor John Wiseman**

Professorial Research Fellow, Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute, Adjunct Professor, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, The University of Melbourne

**Dr David Shearman AM. MB. ChB. PhD (Edin) FRACP FRCPE**

Emeritus Professor of Medicine, University of Adelaide

**Professor Andy Pitman**

Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Climate Extremes, The University of New South Wales

**Dr Graeme Pearman AM FAA FTSE**

Former Chief, CSIRO Atmospheric Research; Professorial, Fellow, University of Melbourne

**Ben Oquist**

Executive Director, The Australia Institute

**Richard Denniss**

Chief Economist, The Australia Institute

**Dr Liz Hanna PhD, MPH, BA, RCCN, RN FPHAA, FACN**

Honorary Senior Fellow, Climate Change Institute, Australian National University

**Ellin Lede**

Phd Researcher, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, UK

**Dr Bill Hare**

CEO and Managing Director/ Senior Scientist, Climate Analytics

**Professor Philip Jennings**

BSc (Hons) UWA, PhD Harvard, Murdoch University

**Professor Hans Lambers FRNAAS, FAA**

Emeritus Professor at UWA; Adjunct Professor at Curtin University

**Professor Richard J Hobbs**

IAS Distinguished Fellow, School of Biological Sciences, University of Western Australia

**Associate Professor John Bailey BSc, PhD**

Emeritus Professor, School of Veterinary and Life Sciences, Murdoch University

**Professor Charles Watson**

Emeritus John Curtin Distinguished Professor of Health Sciences, Curtin University

**Professor Carmen Lawrence BPsych W.Aust**

Faculty of Science, School of Psychological Science, University of Western Australia; former Premier of Western Australia

**Professor Peter Newman AO**

John Curtin Distinguished Professor of Sustainability, Curtin University Sustainability Policy (CUSP) Institute, School of Design and the Built Environment, Western Australian Scientist of the Year 2018.

**Dianne Katscherian**

Adjunct Senior Research Fellow at Curtin University

**Professor Melissa Haswell**

Public Health Scientist, Queensland University of Technology