



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

Northern Land Council condemns ‘sneaky’ Petroleum policy on the run

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The Petroleum Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 was introduced to the Northern Territory Parliament in mid-October by the Minister for Mining and Industry, Nicole Manison. Information released by the NT Government following the introduction of the bill (Community Bulletin #55) made no reference to changes in relation to so-called ‘appraisal gas’.

Appraisal gas is released following successful drilling during the exploration stage of onshore gas development. Under the current law, this gas belongs to the Crown until the production phase commences. The Bill proposes to change the law to make appraisal gas the property of the exploration company.

“The Northern Territory Government is rushing the Petroleum legislation through this week and deserves to be slammed for selling out Territorians and Traditional Owners,” said the Chairman of the Northern Land Council and 2023 NT Australian of the Year, Samuel Bush Blanasi today.

Despite the concerns of other land councils and native title holders, the Northern Territory Government has decided to proceed with the legislation that fundamentally alters the regime for onshore gas development. Land owners and native title holders were caught by surprise when it was introduced as it contains changes that were kept secret.

“This is a sneaky thing to do. They pretend it’s about the protecting the environment but it’s really about caving in to industry,” the NLC Chairman said.

The purpose of the Bill is to implement recommendations arising from the Pepper Inquiry – the Independent Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory. Clause 7 of the Bill provides that property in petroleum produced from a well on a petroleum title passes to the interest holder at the wellhead.

“This thing they call ‘appraisal gas’ is really stolen gas. Except it’s the Territory Government that’s stealing it and handing it over to industry,” the NLC Chairman added.

Joe Martin-Jard, CEO of the Northern Land Council, said he felt blindsided by the measure and questioned the integrity of the policy process. “This was never part of the Pepper recommendations. There was no consultation, no modelling of the impact or volumes involved, no time for us to properly consider it, no consideration of alternatives, absolutely no respect for traditional owners and native title holders or our Council Members who answer to their communities on these issues. It’s disgraceful.”

“We’re going to have to look at all our agreements now in this sector. This measure has created so much confusion and uncertainty,” Mr Martin-Jard added.

“The Government should know better. They have made a bad mistake here and selling us all out. They should stop treating Land Councils and Traditional Owners with contempt and get rid of this measure from the Bill,” said NLC Chairman Bush-Blanasi.

“If they don’t, I want the Chief Minister to explain why.”