

## **More than a 'pinpricks'**

Last wed 18 Sept, Minister Simon Bridges launched a consultation on the proposed offer of 434,000 sq.km. of NZ's land and sea for oil and gas exploration in 2014. The Minister was quick to describe what eventually get to production as 'pinpricks'.

Yet the Macondo exploratory well was just a 'pinprick' that blew up into a \$40 billion catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico, a vast region still suffering from devastated fisheries, tourism, wildlife and ill health among residents. Elsewhere in the US and Australia, numerous cases of water contamination, air pollution and health problems have resulted from the aggressive sprawl of unconventional gas extraction, enabled by fracking. Each well was just a 'pinprick'!

I live in PEP 51149, one of seven onshore petroleum exploratory permits in Taranaki expiring today (22 Sept). It'd have been a call to celebrate, except that PEP 51149, spanning 440 sq.km. from north of Oakura to south of Oaonui, is open for consultation, just as the other six expiring permits, presumably allowing further exploration or moving into production?

I wonder what kind of 'consultation' we can expect from Minister Bridges? No, the public does not have a say. Will iwis and councils genuinely be listened to? Will they speak on behalf of the public, communities that don't want to become another Tikorangi, or fisherfolk and marine life that rely on clean oceans? Will they speak of the already overstretched social and environmental limits that the industry ignores – 'balloons' that may just burst with a 'pinprick'?

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