

Press Release:

Sarah Roberts, David Morrison and Mike Self

Concerned and affected Taranaki residents

Response to:

‘Evaluating the environmental impacts of fracking in New Zealand: An interim report’

Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment

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According to her report Dr Wright, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment “cannot be confident operational best practices are actually being implemented and enforced” in New Zealand. Our friends, families, and communities live right next to these oil and gas companies and their activities directly impact on our lives. We believe for these reasons there should be an immediate moratorium in place as a precautionary measure until these critical regulatory concerns are investigated. The government must be held accountable. We do not want another Pike River or Rena.

Mr Heatley and Taranaki Regional Council have held up the council as exemplary in regards to oil and gas monitoring and regulating encouraging others to follow their lead across New Zealand. We did not agree. Taranaki Regional Council publically denounced us as mischievous and vexatious and refused to respond to our concerns. We have only ever tried to bring attention to the worries and issues we have for our families, communities and environment. We believe this report vindicates us and highlights our concerns.

The following is what fracking looks like in Taranaki. And it is more than fracking- it is drilling, fracking, flaring, producing, regulating and monitoring.

TAG Oil at Ngaere have consent to drill and produce from many wells right beside our family, friends, community, and local school. They have breached consent and flared constantly 24/7 for months. They can discharge contaminants including hydrocarbons into waterways, onto land, and into the air beside us. Well blow-outs, pipeline blow-outs, and tanker blow-outs are significant risks identified within a one kilometre radius of the wellsite. This puts our homes, local school and SH3 within this area. The tankers drive through the middle of our towns in Taranaki.

Shell Todd Oil Services from Kapuni gas fields have recently got consent by the local councils to drill and frack through the aquifer supplying the drinking water for South Taranaki. As well as fracking fluids they are going to use tracers made up of radioactive materials including one that has a half-life of millions of years. The mitigation steps the council are taking are an alarm system which will indicate they need to turn off the water supply to the town if the drinking water becomes contaminated.

Todd Energy wrote a submission to the Parliamentary Commissioner. This was supported by Taranaki Regional Council (TRC). However this Company recently had a TRC environmental monitoring report that indicated poor performance. This is the lowest rating on the scale.

None of this is good enough. The public need to know what is happening. Our councils (and ultimately the government) and the companies need to be held accountable. It is our experience 'on the ground' the oversight is too complex and fragmented. We believe the regulation is too light-handed. The Councils have left it to the industries to self-regulate. We feel the boundaries between Taranaki Regional Council and the oil and gas companies have blurred. The former have become the chief cheer leaders of the industries rather than effective environmental regulators.

We agree a 'social licence' to operate has not been earned. A social licence is not building a swimming pool, sponsoring an art festival, supporting the local rugby team, investing in a museum, or providing a scholarship at a local secondary school. In this context this could be considered a social bribe. We believe a social licence to operate means allowing the public a transparent engagement in the process that determines whether oil and gas development goes ahead next to them and across New Zealand and what that looks like. Even the government's own Green Growth strategy group last year recommended a national discourse on oil and gas expansion in New Zealand.

We remain concerned and affected Taranaki residents

Sarah Roberts, David Morrison and Mike Self