

CJT oral submission on the Fast Track Approvals Bill, 14 June 2024

Climate Justice Taranaki (CJT)'s main purpose is to raise awareness around the connection between climate change and social justice, including inter-generational justice. To mitigate climate impacts, we must address social injustice, we need system change.

For over 13 years, our group has raised issues that are otherwise hidden, like the harm and risk of fracking used extensively by the oil/gas industry (2011). We work closely with other groups to build community understanding and actions. We engage respectfully with governments to share our Kaupapa. This submission is one of many.

The Fast Track Approvals Bill is anti-nature, undemocratic and unconstitutional. Together with the wholesale legislative repeals and amendments, of the RMA and the Crown Minerals Act, and axing public sector jobs, the Fast Track Bill could lead to far-reaching environmental and social harm. Many other submitters, like former Ministers for the Environment, Eugenie Sage, Marian Hobbs and Simon Upton from across the political spectrum, make this case.

Let's share with you the reality here in Taranaki. Yes, the oil and gas industry has been a big player in our economy, but with real costs on the environment and communities. Oil and gas wells, typically on farms, drilled and fracked multiple times year on year, the flares that pump out harmful pollutants and GHG, the landfarms where toxic drilling wastes are spread on pastures, contaminating soil and water...

Nowhere is the unholy alliance between the fossil fuel industry and industrial agriculture so obvious. Some of the gas extracted from wells on a dairy farm goes across the road into a factory to make urea fertiliser, which is then used to grow more grass for more cows. Some of these cows could have grazed on farms that had taken drilling wastes. In 2013, Fonterra refused to take milk from new landfarms. That slowed down the expansion of landfarms to new areas, but it did not stop the practice.

Did you know that Taranaki's landfarms are now either full or nearly full? Where will the waste end up, with new exploration and drilling on- and offshore, potentially fast-tracked?

Our moana and its inhabitants are already under tremendous pressure, from existing oil and gas activities, commercial fishing, maritime traffic, looming seabed mining and massive offshore windfarms, potentially fast-tracked.

Along with local hapū, iwi, Kiwis Against Seabed Mining and numerous others, we fought the Trans-Tasman Resources (TTR) from day 1, and won all the way to the Supreme Court. Not mentioned in any EPA hearings, TTR has applied to MBIE for an extension area that would more than double the current 65.7sq.km. of mining area. TTR has also applied for extension of an expired exploration permit adjacent to the mining permit, into the West Coast N. Island Marine Mammal Sanctuary. This exploration area is almost ten times bigger. With so much at stake, can you expect us and our allies to let TTR return with a Fast Track Approval?

The South Taranaki Bight is being treated as an industrial zone and a money spinner. At least six companies are looking to make big bucks from our world-class wind. We have even been dubbed “*Saudi Arabia of Wind*”!

We get this question a lot: What would you choose - seabed mining or offshore wind?

But that is the wrong question.

Do we need either of them? What for? What are the true costs? What are the alternatives?

The purpose of the Fast Track Bill “*is to ... facilitate ... projects with significant regional or national benefits.*”

But what exactly are “*significant regional or national benefits*”? Will they make Taranaki or Aotearoa a better place, a fairer place where communities flourish alongside thriving ecosystems? We know that industries and corporate friendly politicians are skilled in “*privatising profits and socialising losses*”.

Are we willing to lose our taonga species, the Māui dolphin, blue whale, little penguin, albatross and countless species we don't yet have names for?

The bottom line for us: Taranaki refuses to be a sacrificial zone!

Last week on 5th June, World Environment Day, the UN Secretary General said, “*While billions around the world see their lives grow costlier due to climate change, “the Godfathers of climate chaos – the fossil fuel conglomerates – rake in record profits and feast off trillions in taxpayer-funded subsidies.*

I call on these companies to stop acting as enablers to planetary destruction. Stop taking on new fossil fuel clients, from today, and set out plans to drop your existing ones...”

Yet what is this government doing? Lift the oil exploration ban, open up public conservation lands to miners...

Politicians and mining companies tell us that we need more coal mines and fossil gas for energy security, and search for so-called critical minerals to decarbonise. Well, that is only part of the story, and a very misleading one.

The truth is there are real biophysical limits that restrict how much natural resources we can extract, consume and pollute. Of the 9 planetary boundaries, 6 have been overshoot, climate change is only one of them.

Even if it is possible, trying to replace all fossil fuel energy with renewables to power everything that we **desire**, will destroy the biosphere that sustains us and our co-inhabitants. We must learn to live within our means.

In Taranaki, the Rotokare Scenic Reserve is a place much enjoyed by boaties, runners and nature lovers. It is also a lifeboat for species that have been returned from near extinction like tieke / saddleback and hihi / stitchbird, and many declining wetland species. This 230ha pest

free sanctuary is humming with life, thanks to teams of dedicated volunteers working for years in ecological restoration. Their success means that each year kiwis are bred and released to repopulate Taranaki Mouna and elsewhere.

Rotokare is a shining example of what communities can give to restore nature and thrive in it. There are numerous conservation lands that have the potential to do the same, if protected from mining and other destructive projects.

Positive change is already happening – community energy systems, regenerative farming, and people growing kai to support one another and local markets. Te Māra hapori o Parihaka has just won Organic NZ's Community Garden of the Year, while Taranaki Farmers' Market was crowned Farmers' Market of the Year.

No, we don't need fast-track, we need to slow down – slow down our consumption and take time to build communities and what truly matters.

We are absolutely against this Bill. We ask that it does not progress further.