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APPEA urges activists to accept umpire's decision

The oil and gas industry is calling for an end to scare campaigns against hydraulic fracturing in the Northern Territory after the release of an independent report by Dr Allan Hawke, which offers a strong vote of confidence in the development of a new natural gas industry in the Territory.

After a nine-month inquiry, Dr Hawke concluded that hydraulic fracturing can continue to be safely used to develop the Territory's shale gas resource, estimated to be one of the largest in the world.

APPEA Director – Northern Territory Steven Gerhardy said the report appeared to offer a sensible blueprint for the safe and responsible development of what could be an important new industry.

"Shale gas has the potential to provide much-needed jobs, investment and improved infrastructure in remote and regional areas," Mr Gerhardy said.

"Royalties from shale gas could also become an important new source of revenue for the NT, increasing financial certainty for future governments and reducing their reliance on Canberra."

Mr Gerhardy said Dr Hawke had produced a comprehensive and credible report that was a victory for science over scaremongering.

He urged activists who had campaigned for an inquiry into hydraulic fracturing to accept the inquiry's findings.

"Dr Hawke has carefully considered the evidence, he has listened to all sides of the debate and he has concluded that with good operator practice and regulation, hydraulic fracturing can be done safely.

"Territorians can draw confidence from this report and from the fact that hydraulic fracturing has already been performed on more than 30 wells in the Territory since the 1970s without incident."

Mr Gerhardy said the Northern Territory Government should avoid the mistakes of other governments that sought to appease opponents of gas development by imposing restrictive and unnecessary regulatory controls.

"The report highlights the importance of ensuring the Territory has an efficient, transparent regulatory framework that encourages new projects while delivering the highest standards of environmental protection," he said.

"Dr Hawke has not recommended industry be excluded from parts of the Territory and the government should avoid going down this path. Access to resources should be based on scientific principles – not on arbitrary lines drawn on a map."

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