



Common Grace Submission

**Re: Draft Greenhouse Gas Emissions Offsets Policy,
Northern Territory Government**

To: Northern Territory Government, environment.policy@nt.gov.au

Cc: Chief Minister, chief.minister@nt.gov.au

BY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

15 October 2021

Re: Northern Territory Government Draft Greenhouse Gas Emissions Offsets Policy

Dear Chief Minister and Northern Territory Government,

A Christian response to creation and climate justice and a call for genuine action.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the Northern Territory Government's Draft Greenhouse Gas Emissions Offsets Policy.

The Common Grace Movement

Common Grace is a growing movement of over 50,000 Australians pursuing Jesus and Justice.

The Common Grace movement works towards Creation and Climate Justice, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice, Justice for People Seeking Asylum and Refugees, and Domestic and Family Violence Justice. We are pursuing a safe climate for all of Creation through the protection and restoration of God's beautiful Earth.

We are led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian Leaders to pursue friendship and Reconciliation in our lifetime. This is role modelled in the fact that as CEO of the movement I myself am an Aboriginal person, a descendant of the Wakka Wakka peoples. I am the first Aboriginal person to be appointed as the CEO or National Leader of a Christian organisation in Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice cannot be separated from Creation and Climate Justice and Aboriginal peoples have been fighting for a safe climate for over 250 years.

Common Grace condemns any plans of continuation and extension of fracking in the Northern Territory, especially without requirements to offset life cycle emissions.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice

For Aboriginal peoples, connection to Country is an essential component of culture, community and identity. Country holds stories, songlines and cultural significance. Rights to land and water, including water underneath the land, is a cultural right.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms that Indigenous peoples should have the right to practice their spiritual relationship with traditional lands and waters (Article 26), and that States should obtain the *'free, prior and informed consent'* of Indigenous peoples before conducting any measures that may affect them (Article 19).

Traditional Owners have been speaking out against fracking in the Northern Territory, expressing concerns of the harmful effects that it will bring on Country and communities. Yanyuwa Garawa woman from Borroloola Joni Wilson said the following as part of the Senate Inquiry into Oil and Gas Exploration and Production in the Beetaloo Basin:

"We have not been given any information about fracking, we have not given anyone permission. No one has asked us, and even if our Old People had, no one understood what was being asked. So no, we haven't given permission."

As the Common Grace movement we highly value deep listening and self determination of Aboriginal peoples, thus we are concerned by the silencing of Aboriginal voices and the lack of appropriate consultation with Traditional Owners on this matter.

Creation and Climate Justice

As followers of Jesus, we want to honour our Creator and serve our neighbours. Given what we now know with a high level of confidence about climate, for us to continue on a path that is making the globe a more hostile and less habitable place is an insult to the One who made us and a betrayal of all those with whom

we share our planetary home. Instead, trusting in God's goodness and empowered by the Spirit of life, followers of Jesus can walk a path in which love, truth and grace abound, a path towards clean air, clean politics and a clean heart.

The most recent IPCC Working Group I report, *Climate Change 2021: the Physical Science Basis* makes it clear that “unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond reach”¹. The International Energy Agency's *Net Zero by 2050: A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector* report has recommended that, if we are to keep to the 1.5°C target under the Paris Agreement, there be no new fossil fuel projects.²

The Gunner Government has made aspirational commitments to net zero emissions by 2050. This Greenhouse Gas Emissions Offsets Policy and Technical Guidelines works against this commitment.

The quickest and cheapest way to cut emissions is to stop burning fossil fuels such as gas and replace them with renewables. The path exists for all of us to use significantly less energy, smarter energy and cleaner energy. Alternative sources of energy exist to supply the world's needs with clean, smart energy. We call on the Northern Territory Government to respond rapidly to the science of climate disruption by building an economy on renewable energy, to help the world meet the emissions reductions targets set by scientists to keep our climate as safe as possible, and not exceed 1.5°C of warming.

The Draft Offsets Policy does not satisfactorily align with the Gunner Government's promise to offset life cycle emissions from fracking in the Northern Territory. However, any emissions resulting from fracking are unacceptable. Common Grace adds our voice to the recent calls made by 60 independent scientists and experts that “Offsets are not a real solution. We should not be allowing fracking to go ahead in the first place.”³ This includes no fracking in the Beetaloo Basin.

Conclusion

Due to the lags in climate change and the lack of credible action by successive governments across the globe, some further warming is now inevitable; however, the worst effects are still very much avoidable. We will need to manage changes that are now unavoidable, but also avoid changes that will be unmanageable. The key to the latter is leaving the vast majority of fossil fuel reserves in the ground.

¹ <https://www.ipcc.ch/2021/08/09/ar6-wg1-20210809-pr/>

² <https://www.iea.org/reports/net-zero-by-2050>

³ https://nb.australiainstitute.org.au/fully_offset_nt_fracking

The required changes to slash emissions and stabilise temperatures are immensely challenging, but technically feasible.

We ask that the Northern Territory Government take genuine climate action to reduce emissions and listen to the calls made by independent scientists that CSS offsets are not a solution. We also ask that Aboriginal voices are deeply listened to and Traditional Owners are consulted with on this matter.

We are happy to present at any public inquiry that is held regarding the Northern Territory Government's Draft Greenhouse Gas Emissions Offsets Policy.

Submission made by Common Grace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Coordinator Bianca Manning and Common Grace Creation and Climate Justice Coordinator Jane Kelly.

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