

25 August 2023

Honourable Leanne Linard MP
Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister
for Multicultural Affairs
Department of Environment and Science
Locked Bag 3405
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Minister Linard,

I am pleased to be writing to you to provide the GasFields Commission Queensland's (the Commission's) formal response to the Lake Eyre Basin (LEB) Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement. The Commission appreciates the opportunity to make a submission.

The Commission supports Government's work in relation to the Lake Eyre Basin in Queensland and its continued efforts towards greater certainty for all stakeholders. Ensuring Queensland's environmental protections can achieve a balance between ecological sustainability and future economic prosperity for the Queensland LEB region is an important issue.

The protection of cultural values within the Lake Eyre Basin in partnership with First Nations peoples and in alignment with their priorities is key to this reform. It is crucial that the department commits to, and follows through with the implementation of, its proposal to "examine how best to enable the realisation of First Nations people's aspirations for cultural, economic, social, and environmental opportunities and outcomes, including land and river management, First Nations-owned and managed tourism and business, and First Nations enterprises and entrepreneurialism such as in biodiscovery and traditional knowledge." This should include utilising existing Traditional Owner and First Nations governance arrangements.

The Commission acknowledges the sensitive ecological and cultural values in the Queensland LEB is complex when considering the competing priorities of adequate environmental protections, while also supporting sustainable economic activities. The Commission also recognises the importance of the onshore gas industry in the LEB, where gas exploration and development has been an important contributor to the economic prosperity of the region and State.

Further, the Commission would like to acknowledge that the consultation undertaken through the LEB Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG). The continuation of the SAG into the implementation phase of any regulatory amendments would provide an important mechanism to engage and ensure transparency in achieving the desired outcomes of the review.

The Commission has not been a part of the SAG to date. However, we would very much value the opportunity to join the conversation around the Lake Eyre Basin, given the

Commission's current remit to manage and improve a sustainable coexistence of landholders, regional communities and the Queensland onshore gas industry.

The Commission has existing relationships with the gas industry and agricultural sector, and is well positioned to positively input to and assist with implementation. The Commission's functions and operations focus on activities in three key areas:

- **facilitating** effective stakeholder relationships, collaborations and partnerships to support information sharing related to the onshore gas sector;
- **reviewing** effectiveness of implementation of regulatory framework related to the onshore gas sector; and
- **advising and influencing** ministers, government and the onshore gas sector on matters related to sustainable coexistence, leading practice and management of the onshore gas sector.

The issues in the management of resource activities in the LEB very much relate to sustainable coexistence. The Commission is a leader in the conversation around the coexistence of the onshore gas sector, landholders and rural and regional communities. We have facilitated an ongoing dialogue around complex coexistence issues and brought about change and improvements in policy, legislation, relationships, and behaviour. Crucially, the Commission plays an important role in facilitating engagement between its stakeholders.

Engaging with stakeholders, identifying information needs, and developing and delivering educational tools to fill information gaps are among the services offered by the Commission. The Commission's unique position as an independent statutory body with strong stakeholder relationships makes it well placed to undertake these activities and build trust among stakeholders. The Commission is currently expanding its services and activities to work more closely with first nations people in regional communities.

While the Commission's activities have been largely focussed on the Surat Basin and coal seam gas development in recent years, the Commission's remit is already state-wide and would cover the onshore gas industry in the LEB. The Commission has recently undertaken a strategic refresh and is seeking to broaden its geographic reach to include the emerging and mature basins that the Commission has limited dealings with to date. We are looking to leverage our experiences and apply the learnings accrued over a decade of coexistence facilitation.

Additionally, the Queensland Government recently proposed that the Commission's role be broadened from onshore gas to the resources industry and the renewable energy sector. Should this proposal be realised, the Commission's scope for adding value in the form of stakeholder engagement, education and information sharing in the Lake Eyre Basin will be significantly expanded.

The Commission would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the Department of Environment and Science to further enhance the sustainable coexistence of landholders, regional communities, and the resources sector in Queensland. Should the Department wish to further discuss the Commission's services, we would be more than happy to meet with you to discuss further collaboration.

Should you wish to discuss any matters in relation to the Commission's submission or arrange further engagements with myself on the matter, please contact Warwick Squire, our Chief Executive Officer on 0423 781 995 or via email at warwick.squire@gfcq.org.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Anderson', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

John Anderson
Chair
GasFields Commission Queensland