

Buru gets TO support

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Haydn Black

THE battle over fracking is likely to come to a head in the near future with Buru Energy keen to frac two further wells in its Yulleroo field, the site of a protest by Yawuru traditional owner Micklo Corpus, the Yunggora traditional owners have thrown their unqualified support behind Buru's plans.

Buru has just completed fracking the Valhalla North-1 and Asgard-1 wells, and the next logical step would be to move the frac spread to the Yulleroo field, however the company says simply that discussions with the Yawuru community ongoing, and has given no indication on exactly when the operations will be undertaken.

Common-sense would suggest that neither Buru nor Condor Energy Services want the frac spread sitting around gathering red dust in the basin for too long, however Buru has previously committed to not undertake fracking without some level of community buy-in.

Energy News has contacted both Buru and the Yawuru without responses.

The attitude at Noonkanbah station to the east, the location of a major land rights dispute sparked by oil exploration at the remote Kimberley cattle station in the early 1980s, is very different from that in the west.

"Buru Energy has recently completed their fracking operation on our country," Yunggora chairwoman Caroline Mulligan and Koolkarriya committee chairman Ronnie Lormada said in a joint statement on Friday.

"We allowed this to happen after speaking to many experts about the effect of this activity on our country and the environment. Our experts looked at Buru's plans and let us know this is a safe activity if it is done properly. We trust Buru to do this properly."

They claim the lands by the Fitzroy River have been their traditional lands for many thousands of years, and say they hope and dream that Buru's operations will help get young people involved in the workforce and get them involved in looking after their country.

Buru employed up to 30 locals during the Valhalla North and Asgard campaigns.

"It has been great to see our young people work closely with Buru and we have that connection," Mulligan and Lormada said.

Thomas Skinner, chairman of the Yunggora native title corporation, said the Koolkarriya was established as a business council to represent the seven clan groups in the claim area.

"The council really connects with Buru Energy so that we can have future work and opportunity for our young people," Skinner said.

"The reason we selected the people on the business council is so that they can feed back to their own people that they can have their own business going as well.

"If Buru Energy get cranked up, that is really good for us."

"We really want to keep this place going. We want to keep our young people safe from alcohol and the new drugs coming into the Kimberley. This is what is killing our people. Mining is giving us job opportunities to work on our own land. We need training and job opportunities for our kids future.

"Alcohol and drugs is killing our people – not mining or oil and gas."

That's a big turnaround from 1979 and 1980 when Noonkanbah Station was a flashpoint in protests cover plans by US oiler Amax to drill for oil.

Then-WA Liberal premier Charles Court sent a 45-strong convoy of non-union drilling rigs and trucks from Perth to force through a picket line at Noonkanbah, but no oil was found in the drilling.

Buru believes the Laurel Formation has a best case potential for a recoverable 2.4 billion barrels of condensate and almost 100 trillion cubic feet of gas (gross), with tests of four wells planned this dry season a critical proof of concept.

The early results look promising.

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Buru previously fracked two wells at Yulleroo in 2010 without protest.

Petroleum minister Bill Marmion said the employment of up to 30 of the Yungngnora in the fracking highlighted the extraordinary promise of the Kimberley gas industry.

"What we are seeing is a triumph of common sense, local engagement and world-leading regulation," Marmion said.

"This is potentially a landmark moment for Kimberley jobs and communities. If the two stimulated wells live up to their promise, it could lead to long-term employment, new skills and better futures for local families and their children.

"This stands in stark contrast to the Labor Party's proposed anti-jobs moratorium on gas fracking, which will deny regional opportunities.

"And that's not to mention the broader benefits of accessible gas for Western Australia's growing domestic market, especially for industry."

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