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Australia's top science advisor says fracking is safe

Australia's peak oil and gas body has welcomed comments by the nation's top scientific advisor to government that hydraulic fracturing, when properly regulated, is safe.

Dr Alan Finkel, recently appointed Chief Scientist, told ABC Lateline last night that: *"...there is a lot of evidence that fracking is safe."*

"That it's being used widely already in the coal seam gas fields, particularly in Queensland. It's being used widely across America. The evidence is not there that it's dangerous. In fact, the evidence is that, if properly regulated, it's completely safe."

APPEA Chief Executive Malcolm Roberts said Dr Finkel's comments were an important contribution to a debate that was too often characterised by misinformation.

"The Chief Scientist's role is to provide independent advice to the Commonwealth Government on science and technology. His evidence-based conclusions carry significant authority and should be respected," Dr Roberts said.

"Hydraulic fracturing is a well-understood technology that has been used safely for decades to extract oil and gas from certain rock formations," Dr Roberts said.

"Like any extractive industry process, the key is to apply good regulation and, as noted by the Chief Scientist, this is something Australia is more than capable of doing."

Dr Finkel is President of the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering, which participated in the Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) review of shale gas in Australia in 2012.

The ACOLA report, peer-reviewed by the CSIRO, found: *"The evidence suggests that, provided appropriate monitoring programs are undertaken and a robust and transparent regulatory regime put in place (and enforced), there will be a low risk that shale gas production will result in contamination of aquifers, surface waters or the air, or that damaging induced seismicity will occur."*

A transcript of Dr Finkel's full Lateline interview can be found here:

<http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2015/s4340246.htm>

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