



Office of the Minister for Mines and Energy
c/- Department of Mines and Energy, Darwin

Attention Alan Holland

By email alan.holland@nt.gov.au

11 December 2012

Dear Mr Holland

RE APPLICATION BY PALTAR PETROLEUM FOR EPs 239 and 306

On behalf of members and supporters of the Environment Centre NT I write to object to the proposed exploration by Paltar Petroleum in coastal waters of NE Arnhem Land covered by these exploration permit applications.

Seismic surveys are known to affect fish populations, dolphins, whales and other marine wildlife (eg, see guidelines on *Minimizing Acoustic Disturbance to Marine Fauna* by the Western Australian Government Department of Industry and Resources).

The areas being targeted by Paltar Petroleum are on the NE Arnhem coastline, which is part of the largest ecologically intact tropical shallow marine environment left in the world today (see Halpern et al., 2008. A Global Map of Human Impact on Marine Ecosystems, *Science*, vol 319, 948-952, and associated online world map).

These bays and estuaries support species known to be affected by seismic surveys, including coastal dolphins, dugong, sea turtles, and large fish populations. The two Exploration Permits cover four Sites of Conservation Significance identified by the NT Government (Elcho Island, Wessel and English Company island groups, Buckingham Bay and associated coastal floodplains, and Castlereagh Bay and associated islands). These areas in particular should be off-limits to seismic exploration and oil production.

Seismic surveys are known to have caused snapper populations to relocate in Territory waters due to acoustic impacts, as shown by reduced catch in the Tiwi box fishery. These near shore areas are important to local Indigenous communities for their economic, cultural, and environmental values and resources.

Given the highly speculative nature of the proposed exploration is in areas of high conservation value, we do not consider the risks to marine wildlife justify approval of the permits.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Blanch'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Stuart Blanch

Director