

PEPANZ Policy Summary: Hydraulic Fracturing (fracking)

What is fracking?

- Hydraulic fracturing is a method for extracting oil or gas from dense rock. The process injects water, proppant (sand or ceramic beads) and a very small proportion of chemicals into a well at high pressure which creates cracks in the rock and allows the oil and/or gas to be extracted.
- It has been practiced around the world for decades and has taken place in New Zealand since 1989. Around 100 wells have used this technique, mostly in Taranaki but some in Waikato and Southland.

Is it safe?

- According to the [Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment](#), fracking can be undertaken safely as long as it is well regulated and controlled and best practices are followed. This is the same conclusion also reached by the British Royal Society.
- New Zealand has strong rules, regulations and monitoring in place to ensure it meets high safety and environmental standards. Every operation is subject to resource consent approval and monitoring.
- Taranaki Regional Council and GNS Science have found no evidence of environmental problems ever arising from hydraulic fracturing activities in New Zealand.

How is fracking in New Zealand different to what happens overseas?

- New Zealand companies drill far less wells, face stricter regulations and are done to much greater depths – well below any water supplies.
- Fracking in the US and overseas is widespread with thousands of wells. Sometimes these have fallen short of industry best practice and are drilled to much shallow depths, potentially affecting water supplies.

Does it cause earthquakes?

- Fracking has been known to induce very minor seismic activity. According to GNS Science, this is generally less than magnitude 2.0 – at usual depths, about the same vibrations as a nearby passing truck.
- More information is available at <http://www.energymix.co.nz/our-environment/exploring-the-issues/figuring-out-fracking/>