
Tamboran Resources Limited (ASX: TBN, OTC markets: TBNNY)

Tamboran Resources VP, Operations and External Affairs interview with ABC

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PROGRAM: NT COUNTRY HOUR WITH MATT BRANN

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Transcript

SPEAKER: A gas company in the Beetaloo Basin has started works on Tanumbirini Station despite the owners of that property not wanting them there. Rallen Australia, which owns Tanumbirini, it's been forced to give access to Sweetpea Petroleum after a decision by the NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal. And in the last few days what's happened out there? Well, that gas company has cut the fence, entered the station and started work. Max Rowley travelled to Tanumbirini and has the story.

LORIS HUME: This country means to me, it's bring back a lot of memory. When I was a little kid we used to play around and old people used to take us hunting and fishing.

MAX ROWLEY: Loris Hume has fond memories of growing up on Tanumbirini Station, but the traditional owner hasn't been back for many years. Last week she returned to the station as the company said it would start work, which could see her country become Australia's newest gas field.

LORIS HUME: I'm not very happy the way they're destroying our country. It's a bit sad for us looking at this mining company and all that, you know.

ANDREW STUBBS: I want to take this opportunity to thank you for coming here today and for showing your support.

MAX ROWLEY: That's Andrew Stubbs, Group Operations Manager at Rallen Australia, which runs Tanumbirini Station, gathering with a group of traditional owners, including Loris Hume, at the property.

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ANDREW STUBBS: I think we've already understood that both parties are not happy with what's going on. And I think it's really important that we work together to show our support for each other. We might have different reasons for it, but at least we are opposed to what they want to do on this property.

MAX ROWLEY: Andrew Stubbs says Rallen is concerned about the impacts of fracking on their business.

ANDREW STUBBS: From our perspective the kind of lease we have on this property is to raise cattle and to farm cattle, and we don't believe cattle and gas fracking and mining can co-exist together because the disruption to the business, the impacts on the cattle, on the stress levels, on where they can go and drink and where they can rest up is totally contradictory to our business.

MAX ROWLEY: Pastoral lease holders in the NT have no right to veto gas exploration on their property. And while Rallen has been trying to oppose Sweetpea Petroleum from exploring for gas, the NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal recently ordered the station to give the gas company access.

ANDREW STUBBS: Yeah, this is a real concern to us because to my understanding an agreement is when two parties come together, they negotiate, they consult with each other, they explain each other's businesses and you come to an amicable agreement, which is then agreed by both parties and signed off on. But what's happened here, we've been forced into a situation which is to us not agreement at all. This has been forced upon us by the judicial, the government outcomes, and we're not happy with that decision whatsoever.

MAX ROWLEY: Following the NT CAT decision Rallen received a letter from Sweetpea saying it would be accessing the property on May 25th.

ANDREW STUBBS: We weren't given anything much other than just saying that they were going to be here on the 25th to access. They had sent a legal written letter to the head office stating that if we took any action to try and stop them physically that there would be action taken against us. And that's all we really received. There was no notification of roughly how many people, what sort of vehicles were going to be entering the property, had they got all the necessary documentation in place to make sure that they meet the legal requirements. And in actual fact nobody's to – it's now 4.04 in the afternoon and nobody's even arrived at the property. And we've gone to great lengths to put some of our mustering processes and that on hold so that we could have this meeting with them and ensure that we were happy that they had all the correct information and documentation to enter the property.

MAX ROWLEY: Two days later Sweetpea began works at the property cutting a fence to install a gate and beginning civil works on an access road and camp for workers.

JOHNNY WILSON: We greatly appreciate that we can work together and try and stop harm to our country. I mean, it's our future. We have to live here, and I water is very sacred to us. Without water there is no life. I'm sure we can all agree on that.

MAX ROWLEY: That's Johnny Wilson, a traditional owner and sharer of the Nurrdalindi Native Title Aboriginal Corporation. Nurrdalindi is an Alawa word for "mixed tribes", and Johnny Wilson says the group

was formed by a range of traditional owners from across the Beetaloo Basin due to concerns their voices were not being heard. But the Northern Land Council as I say an agreement is in place between Sweetpea Petroleum, the council and native title holders.

JOHNNY WILSON: My big concern for fracking on our country is our water. Our cultural heritage, our sacred sites and our future –the future of my people, my children, my grandchildren and people like me, traditional owners, who have families of their own who are thinking about the future of all of us and the pastoralists all together. Because we share that water underground, and if that water is going to get contaminated, we are nothing.

MAX ROWLEY: Rallen says it will appeal the decision in the Supreme Court in June. And Andrew Stubbs says the works shouldn't begin until that decision is heard.

ANDREW STUBBS: And we believe that nothing should be happening until the Supreme Court hearing has been handled and we then have a resolution or an outcome as to what should actually take place. Up until then, we don't think it's fair that they should still be coming on and carrying on with the activities.

MAX ROWLEY: Johnny Wilson says they will continue to fight.

JOHNNY WILSON: We've come a long way as traditional owners and pastoralists living on country. Now we've come so close together to fight one big giant. It's going to ruin our country. And it's so – to us we feel so happy that there is help out there and there are people who wants to protect country as well because they have a life, they have a future as just the same as any one of us here living on country.

SPEAKER: That's Johnny Wilson from the Nurrdalindi Native Title Aboriginal Corporation ending that report by Max Rowley there at Tanumbirini Station in the Beetaloo Basin. As you heard, the company Sweetpea has started civil works on this station to get ready to drill for gas. David Close is the Vice President of Operations and External Affairs at Tamboran Resources, which is Sweetpea's parent company. He told Dan Fitzgerald about the work that is happening out there at Tanumbirini.

DAVID CLOSE: We've begun civil construction works as described in our approved environmental management plan, and the civil equipment on the ground are creating an access track, working on some – creating areas for future work, like water bore drilling and in due course exploration drilling. And they're the main activities underway at the moment.

DANIEL FITZGERALD: There's been reports that Sweetpea cut the fence at Tanumbirini to access the property. Is that correct?

DAVID CLOSE: Yes, as there's no gate at the location where the access track needed to access the exploration permit we've installed a high quality gate to ensure that there's, you know, ongoing security for the herd in that paddock.

DANIEL FITZGERALD: The owners of Tanumbirini, they're very against fracking and any gas exploration on their property. They feel that cattle and gas cannot co-exist. What do you think?

DAVID CLOSE: Yeah, look, everyone's entitled to their views, of course. The – we're doing everything we can to have as cooperative a relationship as possible with the pastoralist. On the ground it's been very respectful and cooperative and we certainly appreciate that. Obviously if there is an exploration permit over your pastoral lease I would say that everyone, like I said, is entitled to their views, but we all obviously have to work under the same laws and the laws in Australia and Northern Territory are that we have overlapping tenure, and so a pastoral lease can co-exist with leases that give rights for mineral exploration or geothermal exploration or production or, in this case, gas exploration. We're required to cooperate and collaborate to allow access to all of those valid interest holders.

DANIEL FITZGERALD: And do you think you'll be able to do that going forward – cooperate and do anything in a safe manner – given how strongly the owners of the property feel against fracking?

DAVID CLOSE: Absolutely. You know, I don't see any reason why – obviously the personal beliefs of our pastoralists are theirs and they hold them and their convictions strongly. The law and the regulations are set up to allow co-existence, and that's – and we'll be able to demonstrate that over time. It's been demonstrated thousands of times around Australia in similar situations where resource companies have co-existed with all different types of pastoral and agricultural operations. And, you know, I think it's been discussed at length in places like the final report of the hydraulic fracturing inquiry and many other reports in the Northern Territory context, in the Hunter report, the Hawke report. And all of them have found that there's no reason that we can't co-exist or we can't have for the benefit of all Territorians access to both pastoral industry, tourism industries and minerals industries and potentially an onshore gas industry.

DANIEL FITZGERALD: There are some traditional owners from that Tanumbirini region who are very against fracking on their country. They've got some serious concerns about potential for water contamination and potential to damage the sacred sites. What do you say to those people?

DAVID CLOSE: Yeah, look, that is a really important topic, of course, and we work very closely with the Northern Land Council. They're the appropriate body properly informed of the anthropology of the area and, you know, are bound under legislation and statutes to represent native title parties. We've worked with the Northern Land Council in this area or the first exploration agreement was put in place in 2012 and the Northern Land Council attested to that I think in some media and are on the record about last week in an article in the National Indigenous Times. And they also confirmed in that article that Sweetpea had that agreement in place and had undertaken work program meetings with the recognised native title holders. So it's simply not true to state that the native title holders haven't been consulted.

Now, as you point out, there are other traditional owners in the broader area that the NLC doesn't recognise as the native title holders or native title participants of that area. Sweetpea, you know, we can't and don't take a view on that, but we're happy to engage every interested stakeholder. And I've had the opportunity to reach out very recently and offer to meet with other traditional owners who have represented their views. And I look forward to the chance to engage with them.

DANIEL FITZGERALD: And if they're listening now, what would you say to their concerns about that potential for water contamination and damage to sacred sites?

DAVID CLOSE: Yeah, okay, so on the first point around water contamination, we very much, you know, appreciate the opportunity to talk through the engineering, the regulations and the way that environment is protected. And such a thorough piece of work completed by the hydraulic fracturing inquiry is really such a valuable reference I think for communities to look back to, you know, over a year of evidence, experts in all aspects compiled into a signal, you know, geographically relevant document. And so that is a really thorough resource and we'd be happy to walk that – through that and broader resources to try and make sure that people have a chance to have all of the information provided to them and answer questions and concerns.

On the – your second point – sorry, Dan, you'll have to remind me of your second part of that question.

DANIEL FITZGERALD: Sacred sites and potential for damage to them.

DAVID CLOSE: Yeah, of course, and so part of that hydraulic fracturing inquiry outcome was that AAPA – it was mandated that AAPA was to engage the Aboriginal area protection authority. A lot of operators already were using AAPA to ensure sacred sites in any given area are identified. So Sweetpea have engage extensively with AAPA, and there is an authority certificate in place for the activities that are underway at the moment, of course. We wouldn't have got an EMP approved otherwise. And the sacred sites have been identified by the appropriate people within the native title holders who have the understanding of those sacred sites to be able to ensure they're protected. And so that something that we are going – are very diligently ensuring there are no impacts. And we've done a lot of work with AAPA to make sure that that's going to be – that they will be protected.

SPEAKER: That's David Close who is the Vice President of Operations and External Affairs at Tamboran Resources, which is Sweetpea Petroleum's parent company. And he was speaking there to Dan Fitzgerald.

END.

Disclaimer: In Sweetpea's view, comments made by Rallen Australia representative Mr. Andrew Stubbs regarding "no notification of roughly how many people, what sort of vehicles were going to be entering the property, had they got all the necessary documentation in place to make sure that they meet the legal requirements" were not factually correct. After two years of consultation and a well-documented public process, that this statement by Andrew Stubbs is categorically untrue.

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About Tamboran Resources Limited

Tamboran Resources Limited is a natural gas company that intends to play a constructive role in the global energy transition towards a lower carbon future, by developing low CO₂ unconventional natural gas resources in the Beetaloo Sub-basin within the Greater McArthur Basin in the Northern Territory of Australia. Tamboran's key assets are a 25% working interest in EP 161 and a 100% working interest in EP 136, EP 143 and EP(A) 197 which are located in the Beetaloo Sub-basin.