

24 August 2023

Statement from Michael C. Douglas, legal academic and litigation lawyer at the University of Western Australia Law School:

1. Could the activists still appear in an upcoming Four Corners episode and speak to other media outlets about Woodside and its CEO?

Whether the activists can appear on the program will depend on what they intend to say, and perhaps on the scope of the program. It seems like these protestors are critics of the CEO - if they continued their criticism on TV they could be in serious strife. They could end up in jail.

2. Is an order like this unusual and does it concern you?

These orders are extraordinary. Preventing protest at a person's home is one thing, but preventing critical speech is another. That the CEO would seek such an order at all speaks volumes about her and Woodside.

Fossil fuel companies like Woodside serve their shareholders but their activities impact us all. There is a public interest in these companies being scrutinised.

Woodside is not a person with a conscience - it acts through decisions of humans, like Meg O'Neill. If Ms O'Neill didn't want to be criticised by members of the public like these hippies, she should not have put her hand up for the job.

3. Further comment:

The protestors are in a tough spot. They will contravene the order if they refer to the CEO in "any offensive manner". But what does that mean? Is it "offensive" if protestors were to say she is leading a company that is putting profit before the lives of future generations? This order could constrain all sorts of legitimate political speech.