



**CONSERVATION  
COUNCIL** ACT REGION

Submission to Australian Government Department  
of Industry, Science and Resources

## Future Gas Strategy Discussion Paper

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November 2023

The Conservation Council ACT Region is the peak non-government environment organisation for the Canberra region. Since 1981, we have spoken up for a healthy environment and a sustainable future for our region. We harness the collective energy, expertise and experience of our more than 40 member groups to promote sound policy and action on the environment.

We campaign for a safe climate, to protect biodiversity in our urban and natural areas, to protect and enhance our waterways, reduce waste, and promote sustainable transport and planning for our city. Working in the ACT and region to influence governments and build widespread support within the community and business, we put forward evidence-based solutions and innovative ideas for how we can live sustainably.

At a time when we need to reimagine a better future, we understand that the changes we need will only happen with the collective support of our community.

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## Introduction

The Conservation Council ACT Region appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the Australian Government Department of Industry, Science and Resources 'Future Gas Strategy'.

The Synthesis Report of the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6-SYR) released in March 2023 is unequivocal in its statements about the urgency required in global emissions reductions.

*“Keeping warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels requires deep, rapid and sustained greenhouse gas emissions reductions in all sectors. Emissions should be decreasing by now and will need to be **cut by almost half by 2030**, if warming is to be limited to 1.5°C.”<sup>1</sup>*

To do this, Australia needs to go hard now on “the stuff that works”, that is, energy efficiency, renewable energy and electrification of every machine that currently burns fossil fuels.<sup>2</sup> We need to stop extracting, burning and exporting fossil fuels.

The Conservation Council approached this Future Gas Strategy Discussion Paper in good faith, expecting it to lay out a proposal for phasing out gas production for domestic use and export over the next three decades, consistent with achieving the Australian Government's legislated target of net zero emissions by 2050<sup>3</sup>. However, the further into the Discussion Paper we read, the more apparent it became that, in the words of Inger Anderson, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme, there is a “disconnect between governments' fossil fuel production plans and their climate pledges”.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the stated objective of supporting decarbonisation, the premise of the Future Gas Strategy, particularly LNG exports, is to perpetuate gas extraction and consumption for as long as the gas industry can continue to influence the Australian Government's energy and climate policies. Analysis in the United Nations Production Gap Report 2023 finds that Australia plans to sustain and even *increase* annual coal and gas production despite legislating a net zero emissions target in 2022.<sup>5</sup>

*“... the trajectories of oil and gas production being planned/projected by 12 countries [including Australia] with the lowest levels of relative economic dependence on their production would exceed global levels under the respective 1.5°C-consistent pathways by 2040.”*

This is unacceptable. Being “a trusted gas exporter and a responsible climate actor” (Discussion Paper page 1) are mutually exclusive behaviours in the face of the climate crisis. The Future

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC, 2023, 'Urgent climate action can secure a liveable future for all', Press release, 20 March, [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/press/IPCC\\_AR6\\_SYR\\_PressRelease\\_en.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/press/IPCC_AR6_SYR_PressRelease_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Saul Griffith, in ABC News, 2023, 'Australian Story: The electric plan to run a suburb off renewables', accessed 7 Nov 2023, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSsKop\\_sdQY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSsKop_sdQY)

<sup>3</sup> Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 2023, Net Zero, <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/climate-change/emissions-reduction/net-zero>

<sup>4</sup> Mercer, D and Slezak, M, 2023, Fossil fuel industry to expand for decades despite carbon pledges, UN report finds, ABC News, <https://www.msn.com/en-au/money/markets/fossil-fuel-industry-to-expand-for-decades-despite-global-carbon-pledges-un-report-finds/ar-AA1jzpr3>

<sup>5</sup> SEI, Climate Analytics, E3G, IISD, and UNEP. (2023). The Production Gap: Phasing down or phasing up? Top fossil fuel producers plan even more extraction despite climate promises. Stockholm Environment Institute, Climate Analytics, E3G, International Institute for Sustainable Development and United Nations Environment Programme. <https://doi.org/10.51414/sei2023.050>

Gas Strategy as it stands needs to be scrapped and rewritten as a phase-out plan by people without vested interests in the gas industry.

## Response to the Introduction of the Discussion Paper

The Council recommends that the Future Gas Strategy's objectives be more explicit about decarbonisation:

- ~~Support decarbonisation of~~ *Decarbonise* the Australian economy — by phasing out fossil gas production, consumption and export, with urgency
- Promote Australia's energy security and affordability — by investing in electrification, renewable energy and energy efficiency
- Help our trade partners on their own paths to net zero — and funding climate adaptation and a just transition for our region.
- Enhance Australia's reputation as an attractive trade and investment destination — should not be listed as an objective of a gas strategy — it is an outcome of achieving the other objectives.

From the Department's 'Planning for gas to 2050'<sup>6</sup> webpage and throughout the Discussion Paper, the Future Gas Strategy favours the gas industry, through the consistent framing of gas as being essential to "economic prosperity at home and for our trading partners". For too long, Australians have been supporting the economic prosperity of the oil and gas sector through tax-payer funded subsidies and high retail prices, for fuels which are destroying our environment, climate and health, driving extreme weather, bushfires, and biodiversity extinctions, for all of which ordinary Australians are picking up the bill.

Even the first-listed objective of the strategy, "support decarbonisation of the Australian economy", exemplifies the influence of the gas industry on this strategy. This is a strategy specifically about fossil gas, a primary source of carbon pollution. The top-level objective of the gas strategy should be to "decarbonise Australia's energy system by phasing out the production, consumption and export of fossil gas", not the passive, vague wording of "support decarbonisation" that fails to acknowledge the polluting role of gas or place any direct responsibility on that industry to reduce its own emissions. Decarbonising our energy system is essentially simple — electrify everything, powered by renewable energy and storage.

Let's stop the pretence that the gas industry is acting in the best interests of anyone or anything except its own executives and shareholders when its players have a long history of lobbying against decarbonisation policies and market reforms.<sup>7 8</sup> The industry's positioning of itself as

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<sup>6</sup> Australian Government Department of Industry, Science and Resources, 2023, 'Planning for gas to 2050', accessed 7 Nov 2023, <https://www.industry.gov.au/mining-oil-and-gas/oil-and-gas/planning-gas-2050>

<sup>7</sup> Lucas, A, 2021, 'Investigating networks of corporate influence on government decision-making: the case of Australia's climate change and energy policies', *Energy Research & Social Science*, vol 81, accessed 7 Nov 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.102271>

Wright, C, Nyberg, D & Bowden, V, 2021, 'Beyond the discourse of denial: The reproduction of fossil fuel hegemony in Australia', *Energy Research & Social Science*, vol 77, accessed 7 Nov 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.102094>

Hudson, M, 2019, 'Enacted inertia: Australian fossil fuel incumbents' strategies to undermine challengers', pp 195–222 in *The Palgrave handbook of managing fossil fuels and energy transitions*, Wood, G & Baker, K (eds), 2020, [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-28076-5\\_8](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-28076-5_8)

<sup>8</sup> Oreskes, N and Nesbitt, J, 2021, A brief history of how big oil outplayed us all, In *These Times*, <https://inthesetimes.com/article/oil-gas-industry-strategy-advertising-seuss-pipeline-climate-change-science>

“essential” is a tactic to perpetuate itself, and has delayed investment in the clean energy transition. In a country with such an abundance of renewable energy potential, it is long past time to call out gas for what it is — a polluting fossil fuel that is causing avoidable harm to our planet and people.

The ‘Planning for gas to 2050’ web page lists “market participants”, prioritising “gas producers”, but fails to include (representation for) the planet from which gas is extracted and its polluting impacts dumped. That “environmental advocacy groups” are the very last stakeholder listed in the colour-coded ‘Audiences’ section (page 5) of the Discussion Paper and climate scientists are not mentioned at all is indicative of the backwards priorities and the primacy of the gas industry’s interests in the Government’s deliberations. This obliviousness at the highest levels of policy to the environmental impacts of human activities is what has led to the massive market failure that is presenting as climate change and the extinction crisis. The planet on which human civilisation depends is not a “market” — it is a rich, delicately balanced source of irreplaceable, wondrous life. The “market” is a construct, a subset of human society which is a subset of complex planetary systems. Failing to make nature visible in markets tacitly permits other participants, particularly producers, to externalise and ignore the costs of their impacts on it. Earth’s climate should be the most important “market participant”, with its needs explicitly prioritised over all others. Doughnut Economics is an excellent model for how to prioritise environmental sustainability whilst balancing genuine human needs<sup>9</sup> (as opposed to the accumulation of obscene wealth).

Another “market participant” that the Discussion Paper fails to mention is our Pacific neighbours. Australian Prime Ministers visit island nations telling their leaders Australia is “taking the challenge of climate change seriously”<sup>10</sup>, making promises about funding and migration, whilst hypocritically expanding gas production that fuels the climate crisis that is making their homes uninhabitable.<sup>11</sup> Again, the Australian Government could be “a responsible climate actor” and create certainty for everyone by setting firm and transparent goals for rapidly phasing out the production, consumption and export of all fossil fuels.

As to the value that gas contributes to our economy, it’s the end products (and the value they add to our economy) that are important for our supply chains, not the energy source that powers their manufacture. Most gas market participants do not need *gas per se*. They need energy, which could mostly be supplied through efficiency, electrification and targeted substitution with biogas and hydrogen. Almost everything can be produced without burning fossil gas without loss of value to the economy.

Affordability is provided by investing directly in electrifying all social housing and adding rooftop PV, not subsidising and perpetuating gas. Redirect all fossil fuel subsidies into electrification, renewable energy and a just transition. Avoid inequitable impacts of the gas transition by prioritising investment in low-income and vulnerable households. Powering homes directly from the sun is the most effective way to give Australians energy security and affordability.

We do not need “continued private sector investment in gas developments”. We do not need further gas exploration or new extraction or expansion. Producers should be required to capture

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<sup>9</sup> Doughnut Economics Action Lab, accessed 7 Nov 2023 <https://doughnuteconomics.org/>

<sup>10</sup> McKay, B, 2023, Pacific backs Australian climate policy: Albanese, The Canberra Times, <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/8417306/pacific-backs-australian-climate-policy-albanese/>

<sup>11</sup> Natano, K, 2022, The climate crisis is making the Pacific islands uninhabitable. Who will help preserve our nations?, Time, <https://time.com/6217104/climate-crisis-pacific-islands-uninhabitable/>

all fugitive emissions without flaring and reserve gas from exports to meet domestic demand. Further expenditure by the gas industry should be limited to maintaining the safety of the existing network and its strategic closure. Public and private investment should instead be directed towards electrification and renewable energy. Imposing a meaningful price on environmental pollution would help rebalance the real costs of the oil and gas industry's contribution to/pollution of the world and fund climate repair and restitution to society's most inequitably affected.

The Discussion Paper, particularly from LNG onwards, asks the wrong questions, guided by the gas industry's interests. The questions should be "how can we accelerate the closure of all fossil fuel production and consumption, while supporting the most vulnerable Australians and small businesses?" Do not ask Australians to make sacrifices or reduce their gas consumption or bear the cost of electrification when the gas industry maximises its profits, minimises its costs and tax payments, and exports the vast majority of the gas it extracts from this land in increasingly risky operations. Do not allow gas saved through domestic efficiencies and electrification to be exported — reductions in consumption must be absolute, not redirected or offset for the benefit of the gas industry's profits.

## Demand

The list of uses of gas in Australia fails to include the second-largest use of gas: the industry itself. More than one quarter of all gas consumed in Australia is burned by the gas industry to liquefy and chill gas for export overseas.<sup>12</sup> The industry exports nearly three times as much gas than is consumed domestically.

The language used in this section — for example, "gas is an important fuel to generate electricity in Australia", "key role", "necessary", "crucial" etcetera — is typical of the gas industry framing itself as being essential. It would be valuable if the Government were to flip this framing, for instance, hold a workshop with zero representation from the fossil fuel industry and war game a scenario where all fossil fuels vanished immediately — how would we provide essential energy to businesses and households? That's where the solutions lie.

There is ample evidence that household electrification with rooftop solar power benefits residents and the energy market as well as the climate. Similarly, there is a wealth of research about powering manufacturing without fossil fuels. Here are just some of the recent reports produced by research and advocacy groups around the country:

- Alternative Technology Association: Household fuel choice in the NEM (2018)<sup>13</sup>
- CSIRO: Consumer impacts of the energy transition modelling report (2023)<sup>14</sup>
- Energy Consumers Australia: Stepping up: a smoother pathway to decarbonising homes (2023)<sup>15</sup>
- Cities Power Partnership: Many hands make light work (2023)<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Climate Council of Australia, 2020, *Passing gas: why renewables are the future*, <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/passing-gas-renewables-are-future/>

<sup>13</sup> [https://renew.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Household\\_fuel\\_choice\\_in\\_the\\_NEM\\_Revised\\_June\\_2018.pdf](https://renew.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Household_fuel_choice_in_the_NEM_Revised_June_2018.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://energyconsumersaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/CSIRO-Technical-Report-Stepping-Up.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Energy Consumers Australia, 2023, Stepping up: a smoother pathway to decarbonising homes, <https://energyconsumersaustralia.com.au/publications/stepping-up>

<sup>16</sup> Cities Power Partnership, 2023, Many hands make light work: connecting governments to accelerate climate action,

- Climate Council: Switch and save: how gas is costing households (2022)<sup>17</sup>
- Rewiring Australia: Castles & cars: savings in the suburbs through electrifying everything (2022)<sup>18</sup> and Electrification is anti-inflationary (2023)<sup>19</sup>
- Climateworks and the Australian National University: Pathways to deep decarbonisation in 2050: how Australia can prosper in a low carbon world (2014)<sup>20</sup>
- ACT Government: Canberra is electrifying: the preferred pathway (2022)<sup>21</sup>
- Macquarie: Clean electrification: how Australia can unleash its renewable energy potential (2023)<sup>22</sup>
- Beyond Zero Emissions: all of their research reports<sup>23</sup>

The Conservation Council recommends expansion of the Australian Government’s \$1.3 billion Household Energy Upgrades Fund to fund the electrification of all social housing and low-income and vulnerable households. Reclaiming the billions of dollars of federal subsidies given away to the fossil fuel industry could feasibly pay for every household in Australia to electrify.

The Discussion Paper notes that gas connections continue to increase “despite the long-term financial incentives to transition away from gas”. The Australian Government needs to review and revise all energy and housing legislation and energy market rules that perpetuate or favour gas or prevent or deter electrification. Regulating immediately to prohibit all new gas connections is the clearest approach to overcome the price disparity in upfront costs that currently favours gas over electric appliance installations.

Businesses, whether individual tradespeople or manufacturers using gas, will continue to do what they know until forced otherwise. Legislating end dates for gas consumption would drive innovation to develop and implement alternative solutions for even the most complex problems — necessity is the mother of invention.

## 2. What role do you see gas-fired generators playing in supporting Australia’s 82% renewable energy targets and beyond?

By 2050, none.

The national electricity grid needs more renewable energy generation from a variety of sources, at different scales, distributed across the country. This needs to —and feasibly can— be supported by a suite of energy storage technologies also distributed and at various scales to meet Australia’s \$100/MWh firming target – including solar thermal, stored hydrogen and new

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<https://citiespowerpartnership.org.au/many-hands-make-light-work-connecting-governments-to-accelerate-climate-action/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/switch-and-save-how-gas-is-costing-households/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.rewiringaustralia.org/report/castles-and-cars-discussion-paper>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.rewiringaustralia.org/report/electrification-is-anti-inflationary>

<sup>20</sup>

<https://www.climateworksaustralia.org/resource/pathways-to-deep-decarbonisation-in-2050-how-australia-can-prosper-in-a-low-carbon-world/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://energy.act.gov.au/the-preferred-pathway/>

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<https://www.macquarie.com/au/en/insights/clean-electrification-how-australia-can-unleash-its-renewable-energy-potential.html>

<sup>23</sup> Beyond Zero Emissions, <https://www.bze.org.au/research>

battery innovations, as well as lithium-ion big batteries and pumped hydro.<sup>24</sup> Distributing pumped hydro storage across thousands of sites can provide grid firming to replace gas-fired generators.<sup>25</sup> Pumped hydro projects do not need to (and indeed should not) be large-scale projects like the over-enthusiastic Snowy Hydro 2.0 nor involve damming any other rivers.

The network also needs greater interconnections to share energy from distributed sources to improve reliability.<sup>26</sup> Complementing this with smart meters, Virtual Power Plants (VPPs) and Distributed Energy Resource Management Systems (DERMS) would facilitate coordination of thousands of home and business energy devices to optimise energy exchange and stabilise the grid.<sup>27</sup>

Investing in household and business electrification, household and business rooftop solar and battery systems, community solar and battery systems, and energy efficiency of buildings will greatly reduce the load on the network and the “need” for gas-fired generation or grid firming.

The Government needs to set the goal of zero gas-fired generation and direct investment into all of the above, not perpetuate the myth of gas being essential.

#### **4. What should government do to consider managing these impacts and to mitigate energy peaks caused by regional or seasonal variations?**

Invest heavily now in all the distributed energy generation, storage and grid management technologies discussed at question 2.

#### **5. How feasible, and at what scale, are alternatives to natural gas for the electricity sector?**

As discussed at question 2, alternatives to *fossil* gas (stop calling it “natural”<sup>28</sup>) are 100% feasible right now across a variety of scales, for generation, storage and firming.

#### **What barriers exist to using these alternatives?**

The *only* barrier to these alternatives is a lack of political will to implement the unequivocal policy settings and funding to implement them and phase out fossil fuels. Any other “barriers” are largely misinformation and excuses propagated by the fossil fuel industry.

#### **6. How much longer will you continue using gas as a fuel source or feedstock for your business?**

Most businesses could become all-electric right now with the right policy settings and support.

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<sup>24</sup> CSIRO, 2021, Diverse array of energy-storage technologies may be key to firming the grid, <https://www.csiro.au/en/news/All/Articles/2021/January/diverse-array-of-energy-storage-technologies-may-be-key-to-firming-the-grid>

<sup>25</sup> ANU, 2017, ANU finds 22,000 potential pumped hydro sites in Australia, <https://www.anu.edu.au/news/all-news/anu-finds-22000-potential-pumped-hydro-sites-in-australia>

<sup>26</sup> Energy Networks Australia, 2023, Net zero Australia – mobilisation and grid firming, <https://www.energynetworks.com.au/news/energy-insider/2023-energy-insider/net-zero-australia-mobilisation-and-grid-firming/>

<sup>27</sup> Beyond Zero Emissions, 2023, Grid firming technology, <https://www.bze.org.au/impact/cleantech-hub/technology/grid-firming>

<sup>28</sup> Oreskes, N and Nesbitt, J, 2021, A brief history of how big oil outplayed us all, In These Times, <https://inthesetimes.com/article/oil-gas-industry-strategy-advertising-seuss-pipeline-climate-change-science>

## **7. Are there alternatives that your business can use instead of gas?**

Electrification is a viable alternative for most commercial and light industrial uses of gas.

Biomethane from agriculture, sewage treatment and landfills should be used to substitute where electrification is not possible, or where methane is an essential feedstock.

### **What barriers exist to using these alternatives?**

As for question 5, the only real barrier to these alternatives is a lack of political will to implement the unequivocal policy settings to implement them and phase out fossil fuels. Most other “barriers” come down to the cost of switching which can be overcome with appropriate funding.

### **How can the substitution of gas be accelerated?**

Clear policy settings, legislation, regulation, funding, skills training and education to support the transition.

## **8. What factor/s influence your willingness to adopt electric appliances or processes? How could governments support small businesses to decrease gas consumption?**

Clear policy settings, legislation, regulation, funding, skills training and education to support the transition.

## **9. What role might carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) and negative emissions technologies (NETs) play in decarbonising industrial processes that are hard to abate in your business or industry?**

Limited. And *must not* be used to offset continued emissions pollution that could feasibly be genuinely reduced or eliminated. NETs —particularly protection and restoration of natural ecosystems— should be used to draw down existing carbon pollution, not offset business-as-usual.

Instead, invest in research and development of technologies to replace those polluting activities. If pollution cannot be avoided from particular activities, we should be questioning whether those activities should be allowed to continue at all. If they are deemed necessary, there should be an effective price on that pollution.

## **10. If your home or small business gas appliances (stove, heating, or hot water system) stop working, would you prefer to keep using gas or switch to an electric appliance?**

Homes and businesses should not be permitted to indulge in a damaging activity because of a “preference” that has been instilled by a century of gas industry marketing (for example, by companies like PetroMehras<sup>29</sup> or outdated perceptions of last-century electric technologies. The

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<sup>29</sup> PetroMehras, 2023, Navigating the Future: The Evolution of Oil and Gas Industry Marketing, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/navigating-future-evolution-oil-gas-industry-marketing/>



popularity of gas was a constructed social norm:<sup>30</sup> it can be replaced with the new social norm of all-electric homes.

### **If you are unsure, what would help you decide? What factors influence your willingness to switch to electric appliances?**

Clear policy settings, legislation, regulation, and direct funding of electrification.

## **11. How can governments, industry and households work together to manage impacts for homes?**

Form partnerships across all levels of government to facilitate electrification and energy transition away from fossil fuels, such as proposed in the ‘Many hands make light work’<sup>31</sup> and ‘Stepping up: a smoother pathway to decarbonising homes’<sup>32</sup> reports. Many local government councils would like to get on with electrification but are hampered by State and Federal Government policies or energy market rules.

Integrate electrification and home energy efficiency into social services because there are clear benefits for health, living costs, and comfort, particularly for low-income and vulnerable households.

## **Australian LNG exports**

The LNG export market continues to expand for its own profit, not to reduce global emissions.<sup>33</sup>

If Australia was genuine about being “committed to working with its international partners to help them achieve their commitments to reach net zero by 2050”, we would have already committed to phasing out all fossil fuels, domestically and for export. We would be investing heavily in renewable energy technologies and their export. We would not continue to sell polluting fossil fuels with the drug-pusher taglines of “cleaner than your dirty coal” or “if we don’t supply it, someone else will”.

The gas industry continues to push the “transition” energy source myth. The world would achieve net zero emissions much faster if we invested heavily now in renewable energy. Continued and expanded investment in gas postpones implementation of the genuinely clean solutions we need ever-more urgently right now.

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<sup>30</sup> Leber, R, 2021, How the fossil fuel industry convinced Americans to love gas stoves, Mother Jones, <https://www.motherjones.com/environment/2021/06/how-the-fossil-fuel-industry-convinced-americans-to-love-gas-stoves/>

<sup>31</sup> Cities Power Partnership, 2023, Many hands make light work: connecting governments to accelerate climate action, <https://citiespowerpartnership.org.au/many-hands-make-light-work-connecting-governments-to-accelerate-climate-action/>

<sup>32</sup> Energy Consumers Australia, 2023, Stepping up: a smoother pathway to decarbonising homes, <https://energyconsumersaustralia.com.au/publications/stepping-up>

<sup>33</sup> Oreskes, N and Nesbitt, J, 2021, A brief history of how big oil outplayed us all, In These Times, <https://inthesetimes.com/article/oil-gas-industry-strategy-advertising-seuss-pipeline-climate-change-science>

**12. What do you see as the role of gas in Australia’s net-zero transformation?**

One that needs to rapidly diminish and cease to exist by 2050. We do not need gas to be a “bridging fuel”.

**13. What action is your industry or company taking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and does gas use have a role to play?**

Actively campaigning for the end of all fossil fuels.

**14. How can Australian LNG accelerate global decarbonisation without compromising energy security or affordability?**

LNG *cannot* achieve global decarbonisation — it is methane, a fossil fuel that produces vast quantities of carbon pollution. It *cannot* provide energy security or affordability for any country that is dependent on importing it. What is needed for all those purposes is urgent, serious investment in all the renewable energy technologies discussed in previous questions.

**15. What measures will increase the transparency of LNG supply chains, including their environmental, social and governance impacts?**

Regulation and enforcement, with heavy penalties for non-compliance. No amount of ESG will change the fact that LNG is a polluting fossil fuel that needs to be rapidly phased out.

**17. What role will LNG – and Australian LNG in particular – play in your economy’s energy transition?**

It needs to be rapidly phased out and replaced with renewable energy.

**18. What is your economy’s current LNG demand and how do you predict this will change through to 2035 and beyond to 2050?**

It needs to be rapidly phased out and replaced with renewable energy.

**19. What options should the Australian Government consider to ensure international investment in Australian LNG projects remains competitive?**

This question exposes the Australian Government’s beholdenness to the oil and gas industry. The Australian Government should be focused on eliminating fossil fuels, not ensuring the competitiveness of the industry most responsible for destroying our planet’s climate.

LNG needs to be rapidly phased out and replaced with renewable energy, not supported by the Australian Government or international investment.

## 20. What value do you place on low or net zero emissions LNG production?

Zero. “Low or net zero emissions LNG production” is a furphy, pure propaganda, like “clean coal”, as mythical as “dry water”. It is a deliberate marketing strategy by the gas industry to buy the social licence to perpetuate gas production.<sup>34</sup>

## Oil and gas regulation in Australia

It is laughable that the Discussion Paper mentions the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* in the context of oil and gas regulation when the Act contains zero power to respond to the climate impacts of fossil fuel projects. The greatest threat to our environment is climate change, yet the Act is completely powerless to protect the planet against the most willful, damaging industries despite the vast body of scientific evidence. And the Australian Government and State Governments continue to approve new and expanded fossil fuel projects with little transparency or consistency with net-zero goals<sup>35</sup>, including throwing a billion dollars of public money at the Middle Arm LNG export facility.

Similarly, the *Native Title Act 1993* and *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976* were utterly useless in preventing Rio Tinto’s 2020 destruction of the sacred Juukan Gorge in blatant disregard for Indigenous heritage.<sup>36</sup>

It is frankly heartbreaking that the fossil fuel industry has such *carte blanche*.

## 21. What is the role of offshore acreage releases in the context of consumer demand and emissions targets? What factors should the Australian Government consider when releasing acreage?

There is no role. The Australian Government should not release any more acreage for fossil fuel projects. To do so would be wholly inconsistent with emissions targets.

The Government should also ban all sonic seismic marine exploration for fossil fuels because of the harm it causes marine life.<sup>37</sup>

## 22. How could the offshore petroleum regime be improved to meet the objectives of the strategy?

Stop approving offshore petroleum. The only way for the offshore petroleum regime to meet the Strategy’s supposed objective of “achieving emission reduction goals” is to legislate for all existing offshore petroleum to close down and rehabilitate the sites.

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<sup>34</sup> Oreskes, N and Nesbitt, J, 2021, A brief history of how big oil outplayed us all, In These Times, <https://inthesetimes.com/article/oil-gas-industry-strategy-advertising-seuss-pipeline-climate-change-science>

<sup>35</sup> Foote, C, 2023, Transparency net zero: new fossil fuel approvals by Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek on the up, Michael West Media, <https://michaelwest.com.au/transparency-net-zero-new-fossil-fuel-approvals-by-environment-minister-tanya-plibersek-on-the-up/>

<sup>36</sup> ANTA, 2022, The destruction of Juukan Gorge, <https://antar.org.au/issues/cultural-heritage/the-destruction-of-juukan-gorge/>

<sup>37</sup> Haskell, D, 2022, An ocean of noise: how sonic pollution is hurting marine life, The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/apr/12/ocean-of-noise-sonic-pollution-hurting-marine-life>

### **23. What are the major barriers and opportunities for new supply? How can the Australian Government prioritise, mitigate or manage these?**

The “major barrier ... for new supply” is the climate crisis and the clear warning from the IPCC that emissions must halve by 2030, not increase.<sup>38</sup>

The Australian Government is clearly not serious about meeting international climate obligations or its own net zero emissions target if it is looking for “opportunities for new supply”.<sup>39</sup>

### **24. What are some of the opportunities for gas production in Australia in the medium (to 2035) and long term (to 2050)?**

In the context of global climate change and decades of warnings by the IPCC<sup>40</sup> — None! See question 23.

### **How could these necessary developments support decarbonisation consistent with achieving emissions reductions goals?**

“Necessary developments”?! They can’t! Any further development of gas projects is the complete opposite of being “consistent with achieving emissions reductions goals”.

This question is a perfect example of cognitive dissonance, spruiking emissions reduction whilst expanding the primary source of them.<sup>41</sup>

We refer the authors of the Future Gas Strategy to the ‘Climate change for dummies cheat sheet’.<sup>42</sup> How can we possibly say it with any greater clarity — “science shows the severe climate consequences of new fossil fuel extraction”.<sup>43</sup>

### **25. How can the Australian Government better communicate and provide more transparency to local communities regarding gas projects?**

“Transparency” about why the Government continues to approve gas projects despite the climate crisis and its own commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050? How to brainwash the public into believing gas industry propaganda? That’s not “better communication”.

The better question would be “how can the Australian people better communicate with the Australian Government about taking serious action to end fossil fuels?”

<sup>38</sup> IPCC, 2023, ‘Urgent climate action can secure a liveable future for all’, Press release, 20 March, [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/press/IPCC\\_AR6\\_SYR\\_PressRelease\\_en.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/press/IPCC_AR6_SYR_PressRelease_en.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> Green, F, 2021, How to know if a country is serious about net zero: look at its plans for extracting fossil fuels, The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/how-to-know-if-a-country-is-serious-about-net-zero-look-at-its-plans-for-extracting-fossil-fuels-170508>

<sup>40</sup> IPCC, 2023, ‘Urgent climate action can secure a liveable future for all’, Press release, 20 March, [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/press/IPCC\\_AR6\\_SYR\\_PressRelease\\_en.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/press/IPCC_AR6_SYR_PressRelease_en.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Australian Psychological Society, n.d., Public understandings of climate change, <https://psychology.org.au/getmedia/88ee1716-2604-44ce-b87a-ca0408dfaa12/climate-change-empowerment-handbook.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> May, E and Kidder, J, 2022, Climate change for dummies cheat sheet, <https://www.dummies.com/article/academics-the-arts/science/environmental-science/climate-change-for-dummies-cheat-sheet-291362/>

<sup>43</sup> Hawkins, E, 2023, Science shows the severe climate consequences of new fossil fuel extraction, The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/science-shows-the-severe-climate-consequences-of-new-fossil-fuel-extraction-210846>

End the hypocrisy: overhaul every policy, Act, program, funding scheme, taxation rule and so on so that they actually support and enforce the pathway to net zero emissions by 2050. Anything less is hypocrisy or greenwashing.

Start by kicking fossil fuel industry lobbyists out of Parliaments and Government departments. Stop listening to and repeating the propaganda of the fossil fuel industry. Ban political donations from fossil fuel companies and associations. Ban all advertising and sponsorships by the fossil fuel industry. Exclude the fossil fuel industry from consultation forums on the future of Australia's energy network, except on questions of how to phase it all out and transition workers. Stop the revolving door of senior public officials and fossil fuel industry executives. Divest public money including superannuation schemes from all fossil fuel companies.<sup>44</sup>

## **26. What opportunities exist to improve engagement and consultation processes with industry?**

Which industry? It appears that the fossil fuel industry has excellent, highly persuasive engagement with Governments. This Discussion Paper embodies “policy capture”.<sup>45</sup>

It appears that Governments need far greater engagement and consultation with climate scientists, the renewable energy industry, and the public.

The fossil fuel industry, on the other hand, needs to be firmly told —and regulated— that it must shut down.

## **27. How can all levels of governments better support the industry to engage with First Nations people and community groups?**

Stop destroying First Nations heritage sites. Write Australia's Indigenous people into the Constitution. Honour all of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Strengthen the *Native Title Act 1993* and *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976* so that they actually respect and protect Indigenous heritage. All of these documents are just documents, written by white men. The Constitution is a trade agreement between colonial States. They're not irreplaceable ancient artefacts. And even if they were, they can and should be updated with our evolving understanding and recognition of history. Anything less is mere lip-service.

## **Reducing emissions from Australian gas production**

It's really simple: end gas production.

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<sup>44</sup> Tham, JC, 2022, How to deal with fossil fuel lobbying and its growing influence in Australian politics, The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/how-to-deal-with-fossil-fuel-lobbying-and-its-growing-influence-in-australian-politics-188515>

<sup>45</sup> Tham, JC, 2022, How to deal with fossil fuel lobbying and its growing influence in Australian politics, The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/how-to-deal-with-fossil-fuel-lobbying-and-its-growing-influence-in-australian-politics-188515>

## Geological storage of carbon dioxide

### **28. How can Australia support the potential for cost-effective, safe and verifiable CCS projects, including for the gas sector, other industries and our region?**

Shut down fossil fuel production and invest in renewable energy as described above and the need for CCS becomes negligible. CCS is still—even after decades of research—of extremely limited value: “the current amount of emissions that were stored through carbon capture was negligible and that four out of every five projects to demonstrate the technology over the past 30 years had failed”.<sup>46</sup>

The UN Production Gap Report 2023 says:

“Given risks and uncertainties of carbon capture and storage and carbon dioxide removal, countries should aim for a near total phase-out of coal production and use by 2040 and a combined reduction in oil and gas production and use by three-quarters by 2050 from 2020 levels at a minimum.”

CCS *must not* be used to offset continued emissions pollution that could feasibly be genuinely reduced or eliminated, nor should any public funding be directed into technologies to offset the gas industry’s emissions. Any CCS and NETs—particularly protection and restoration of natural ecosystems—should be used to draw down existing carbon pollution, not offset business-as-usual.

Instead, invest in research and development of technologies to replace those polluting activities. If pollution cannot be avoided from particular activities, we should be questioning whether those activities should be allowed to continue at all. If they are deemed necessary, there should be an effective price on that pollution.

### **29. How can the Australian Government better communicate and provide more transparency to local communities regarding CCS projects?**

End the hypocrisy: overhaul every policy, Act, program, funding scheme, taxation rule and so on so that they actually support and enforce the pathway to net zero emissions by 2050. Anything less is hypocrisy or greenwashing.

See question 25.

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<sup>46</sup> Mercer, D and Slezak, M, 2023, Fossil fuel industry to expand for decades despite carbon pledges, UN report finds, ABC News, <https://www.msn.com/en-au/money/markets/fossil-fuel-industry-to-expand-for-decades-despite-global-carbon-pledges-un-report-finds/ar-AA1jzpr3>

## Gas transportation and infrastructure

### **31. What changes should be made to the transmission and distribution network to prepare for the changing profile of gas demand in Australia? What risks and opportunities would this entail?**

The gas network should not simply be converted to supply biogas or hydrogen to all current users. All applications that can be electrified should do so and gas infrastructure should be retracted, removed and recycled accordingly.

Economic appraisals and energy market processes should stop treating gas infrastructure as “assets” and start treating them as liabilities or sunk costs that need to be written off. Any further expenditure should be limited to maintaining the safety of the network, not expansion or perpetuation.

### **32. Could the construction of LNG import terminals contribute to improving energy security in Australia?**

No! Australia is a massive *exporter* of LNG. We have zero need to *import* it. If domestic demand for gas exceeds supply, it should be reserved from our exports.

Energy security in Australia can be achieved by capitalising on our abundance of domestic solar, wind, hydro and geothermal energy potential.

### **33. Under what conditions would LNG import terminals be commercially viable in Australia?**

In the context of global climate change and decades of warnings by the IPCC<sup>47</sup> — None!

## Royalties and revenue

The RSPT and PRRT both need to be updated to match industry expansion. The Australian Government should recover billions of dollars of public money by ceasing all subsidies to the industry. That money alone could fund the electrification of every home and business in the country.

The Australian Government has a long history of overstating the importance of the fossil fuel industry’s contribution to the Australian economy and our dependence on it. If the Government stopped subsidising the industry, those savings would fill the hole left by closing down the industry. The economy is stable and well-diversified to absorb the loss of coal exports.<sup>48</sup>

Gas is a bridge to nowhere, a sinking ship. The Australian Government needs to face facts that the world must stop using (and selling) fossil fuels. Australia is well placed to benefit from its

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<sup>47</sup> IPCC, 2023, ‘Urgent climate action can secure a liveable future for all’, Press release, 20 March, [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/press/IPCC\\_AR6\\_SYR\\_PressRelease\\_en.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/press/IPCC_AR6_SYR_PressRelease_en.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> Mao, F, 2021, Climate change: why Australia refuses to give up coal, BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-57925798>

abundant other natural resources and skills, pivot our export strategy and capitalise on green export market trends.<sup>49</sup>

## Australia's gas workforce and LNG facilities

Here again is the exaggeration of the gas industry's importance in Australia's economy. The fossil fuel industry, aided by the Australian Government, has been so effective in promoting the supposed importance of the industry as an employer that Australians overestimate gas industry employment as a proportion of total employment by a staggering factor of 69 times greater than reality.<sup>50</sup>

Direct employment in fossil fuel industries is just 1% of total Australian employment.<sup>51</sup> Fossil fuel jobs are important in some communities that have grown up around those projects, but only 11 out of 350 Australian communities have more than 5% of local employment provided by the fossil fuel industry. The Centre for Future Work found that a planned and fair transition of Australia's labour market away from fossil fuel jobs could occur without involuntary layoffs or severe disruption to communities.

### **34. Are you able to attract and retain the workforce and skills you need? How will these shift as we transition to net zero emissions?**

People are attracted to fair working conditions and meaningful work, not the gas industry per se. The Australian Government should be planning the transition for the gas industry workforce into the clean energy jobs of the future or into other service industries including healthcare and education. This transition must include funding for skills retraining and support for those few communities most affected by the loss of local fossil fuel jobs.<sup>52</sup> The Clean Energy Council recommends establishing a Transition Authority.<sup>53</sup>

### **37. How has the oil and gas industry impacted the local economy and employment opportunities in your region?**

“Climatic trends, extreme conditions and sea level rise are already hitting many of Australia's ecosystems, industries and cities hard. As climate change intensifies, we are now seeing cascading and compounding impacts and risks, including where extreme events coincide.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Beyond Zero Emissions, 2021, Export powerhouse: Australia's \$333 billion opportunity, <https://www.bze.org.au/research/report/export-powerhouse>

<sup>50</sup> Morison, E., 2023, Climate of the nation 2023, The Australia Institute, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/climate-of-the-nation-2023/>

<sup>51</sup> Stanford, J, 2020, Employment aspects of the transition from fossil fuels in Australia, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/employment-aspects-of-the-transition-from-fossil-fuels-in-australia/>

<sup>52</sup> PWC, n.d., Putting people at the heart of Australia's energy transition, <https://www.pwc.com.au/energy-oil-and-gas/people-heart-of-australias-energy-transition.html>

<sup>53</sup> Clean Energy Council, 2022, Skilling the energy transition report provides solutions to Australia's skills and labour challenges, <https://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/news/skilling-the-energy-transition-report-provides-solutions-to-australias-skills-and-labour-challenges>

<sup>54</sup> Mackey, B et al, 2022, New IPCC report shows Australia is at real risk from climate change, with impacts worsening, future risks high, and wide-ranging adaptation needed, The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/new-ipcc-report-shows-australia-is-at-real-risk-from-climate-change-with-impacts-worsening-future-risks-high-and-wide-ranging-adaptation-needed-176691>



“Legal and climate experts say inaction on climate change may cause a ‘cultural genocide’ for First Nations people of the Torres Strait Islands and have likened rising sea levels and climate harms to ‘colonisation’.”<sup>55</sup>

“While actions taken to reduce emissions may present adjustment costs, they will also present opportunities. Indeed, while there is much uncertainty in this area, there is general agreement that a timely and orderly transition will be the less costly approach in the long run.”<sup>56</sup>

“Changes in weather and climate extremes—such as extreme heat, heavy rainfall and coastal inundation, fire weather and drought—have a large impact on the health and wellbeing of our communities and ecosystems. These changes are happening at an increased pace—the past decade has seen record-breaking extremes leading to natural disasters that are exacerbated by anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change. These changes have a growing impact on the lives and livelihoods of all Australians.”<sup>57</sup>

“The recent fires led to the deaths of nearly 500 Australians. The fires directly killed 33 people, and another 429 died from smoke inhalation. And heat waves kill more Australians than all other extreme events combined. Climate-fuelled floods, droughts and violent storms all take their toll on our individual and community wellbeing. The cost of extreme weather in Australia has more than doubled since the 1970s, and totalled \$35 billion over the past decade. By 2038, extreme weather events driven by climate change, as well as the impacts of sea-level rise, could cost the Australian economy \$100 billion every year.”<sup>58</sup>

“When extracted from underground, particularly through hydraulic fracturing, gas can poison water sources and destroy agricultural land, impacting livelihoods and our access to food and clean water.”<sup>59</sup>

“People exposed to oil and gas operations experience a long list of harms. These include: more severe asthma in children requiring more medical treatment, emergency department visits and hospitalisations; and higher hospitalisation and death rates due to heart attacks, heart failure, respiratory diseases and some cancers.”<sup>60</sup>

The impacts of the gas industry’s pollution on our environment, climate and health are escalating. These impacts far outweigh the benefits of gas industry employment.

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<sup>55</sup> Williams, C, Wellauer, K and Russell, A, 2023, Australian Climate Case resumes in Melbourne Federal Court as experts say Torres Strait may become ‘unlivable’ without action, ABC News, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-11-08/australian-climate-case-torres-strait-court/103081738>

<sup>56</sup> Hannam, P, 2023, Climate crisis to create ‘acute’ challenges for Australia’s economy, incoming RBA governor says, The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/aug/29/rba-governor-michele-bullock-climate-change-economy-challenges>

<sup>57</sup> Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology, 2022, State of the climate 2022, <http://www.bom.gov.au/state-of-the-climate/>

<sup>58</sup> Steffen, W, 2021, The deadly costs of climate inaction, Climate Council of Australia, <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/deadly-costs-climate-inaction/>

<sup>59</sup> Australian Conservation Foundation, n.d., Get the facts on gas: a danger to our climate and nature, <https://www.acf.org.au/gas>

<sup>60</sup> The University of Sydney, 2023, Health evidence against gas and oil is piling up, environment experts report, <https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2023/09/04/health-evidence-against-oil-gas-piling-up-usyd-report-frac-king-coal-shale.html>

### **38. What actions will assist workforce retention, upskilling and mobility in your community as the economy transitions to net zero emissions?**

As at question 34, people are attracted to fair working conditions and meaningful work. The Australian Government should be planning the transition for the gas industry workforce into the clean energy jobs of the future or into other service industries including healthcare and education. This transition must include funding for skills retraining and support for those few communities most affected by the loss of local fossil fuel jobs.<sup>61</sup> The Clean Energy Council recommends establishing a Transition Authority.<sup>62</sup>

### **Domestic gas supply**

Do not open new gas sources or expand production — it would be in complete contradiction of climate science and international efforts to reduce emissions. Instead, direct that funding into electrification to eliminate domestic demand.

If gas supply is forecast to fall, then plan now to make sure that demand also falls by at least the same volume. If there is a shortfall of gas for domestic use in the short term, divert it from exports, not new production.

### **39. What are the risks to Australia’s domestic gas security in the medium (to 2035) to long term (to 2050) for your industry and how can these be addressed?**

The risk to domestic gas security is the Government’s own commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2050 in response to the climate crisis. That risk can be totally mitigated by committing to full electrification and managing a planned transition off gas.

### **40. What do you see as the biggest risk to the ongoing affordability of Australia’s domestic gas supply? For example, what are risks to affordability in the wholesale or retail market?**

The risk to affordability is the application of a carbon price due to global climate policies, which again, can be totally mitigated by committing to full electrification and managing a planned transition off gas. Households and businesses will save thousands of dollars by switching off gas, and the sooner they do it, the more they will save.

### **41. What reforms can be made at a Commonwealth, state, territory, or industry level to allow gas supply to be more responsive to domestic demand signals?**

The domestic signal is to get off gas.

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<sup>61</sup> PWC, n.d., Putting people at the heart of Australia’s energy transition, <https://www.pwc.com.au/energy-oil-and-gas/people-heart-of-australias-energy-transition.html>

<sup>62</sup> Clean Energy Council, 2022, Skilling the energy transition report provides solutions to Australia’s skills and labour challenges, <https://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/news/skilling-the-energy-transition-report-provides-solutions-to-australias-skills-and-labour-challenges>

“Over 70% of Australians say that they are concerned about climate change and its impacts, including the potential it has to compound existing cost-of-living pressures.”<sup>63</sup>

A 2023 survey by the Australia Institute found that “a majority of voters feel positive about switching Australian homes away from gas and moving to full electrification”.<sup>64</sup>

We do not need gas supply to be more responsive — we need the electricity network to be powered by distributed renewable energy and smart demand management technologies.

#### **42. What actions are available to lower gas costs, including substitution and new supply, to provide certainty to consumers? How would these actions further the Australian Government’s decarbonisation goals?**

How many times do we need to say “electrification”? The best way that gas users can reduce their gas costs is to switch to electric appliances, delivering cost savings, health improvements and emissions reductions.<sup>65</sup> *Not new supply.*

#### **43. What opportunities exist in your industry to decarbonise supply chains?**

Electrification plus renewable energy.

Here are just a few of the many available resources about how to decarbonise industry:

- Australian Industry Energy Transitions Initiative <https://energytransitionsinitiative.org/>
- Climateworks resource hub <https://www.climateworkscentre.org/resource-hub/>
- CSIRO <https://www.csiro.au/en/about/challenges-missions/Towards-net-zero>
- Beyond Zero Emissions <https://www.bze.org.au/impact/reips>

#### **44. Do you use any forecasts of gas supply to inform your outlook of the gas market? If so, what are they? Which scenarios do you consider best reflect the supply outlook?**

*“Keeping warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels requires deep, rapid and sustained greenhouse gas emissions reductions in all sectors. Emissions should be decreasing by now and will need to be **cut by almost half by 2030**, if warming is to be limited to 1.5°C.”<sup>66</sup>*

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<sup>63</sup> Morison, E., 2023, Climate of the nation 2023, The Australia Institute, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/climate-of-the-nation-2023/>

<sup>64</sup> The Australia Institute, 2023, Getting off gas: majority support household electrification as economic, climate costs rise, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/getting-off-gas-majority-support-household-electrification-as-economic-climate-costs-rise/>

<sup>65</sup> Monash University, 2023, New report makes case for electrifying Australia’s homes to improve health, create jobs and reduce bills, <https://www.monash.edu/mcccrh/news/articles/new-report-makes-case-for-electrifying-australias-homes-to-improve-health.-create-jobs-and-reduce-bills>

<sup>66</sup> IPCC, 2023, ‘Urgent climate action can secure a liveable future for all’, Press release, 20 March, [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/press/IPCC\\_AR6\\_SYR\\_PressRelease\\_en.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/press/IPCC_AR6_SYR_PressRelease_en.pdf)

## 45. Are there any limitations or caveats associated with these scenarios? How do you address these limitations?

*“Keeping warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels requires deep, rapid and sustained greenhouse gas emissions reductions in all sectors. Emissions should be decreasing by now and will need to be **cut by almost half by 2030**, if warming is to be limited to 1.5°C.”<sup>67</sup>*

### Response to the Conclusion of the Discussion Paper

Once again, the conclusion of the Discussion Paper reads like gas industry advertising, overstating its own importance:

“Gas plays a critical role in Australia’s economy. It is a significant export commodity ensuring regional energy security. It also underpins Australian jobs, investment and economic growth.”

The conclusion gets one thing right: “Australia requires a clear long-term strategy to help governments, industries, communities and households make decisions”. This strategy *must* be about rapidly phasing out fossil fuels, based on the IPCC’s climate science, not on finding “opportunities” for the gas industry to continue operations.

A better approach to meeting the “enshrined ... net-zero 2050 commitments” would be to scrap the draft Future Gas Strategy. Instead, gather all stakeholders *except* the fossil fuel industry to hash out a transition plan to net-zero emissions by 2050, then identify any critical gaps that cannot be filled by anything other than methane gas. After that plan is written, then *direct* (with legislation and regulation) the gas industry to plan its own shutdown in accordance with the net-zero plan, retaining only those functions identified as critical to the transition for only as long as they are needed.

Remember that necessity is the mother of invention — if gas is taken out of the picture, human ingenuity and innovation will fill its roles, but the gas industry will not willingly relinquish the space for that ingenuity. Industries and technologies have come and gone over the history of human civilisation, and fossil fuels made a substantial contribution, but they’ve had their day. We called time on asbestos, tobacco, narcotics, chlorofluorocarbons, nuclear weapons, slavery and more — it’s time gas joined the list of harmful banned substances and practices. Civilisation will continue to evolve, but only if we leave fossil fuels in the past.

### Summary and Recommendations

The Conservation Council ACT Region urges a rapid transition off fossil gas with the following recommendations.

1. Establish a strategic partnership across all levels of government to facilitate electrification and energy transition away from fossil fuels.

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<sup>67</sup> IPCC, 2023, ‘Urgent climate action can secure a liveable future for all’, Press release, 20 March, [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/press/IPCC\\_AR6\\_SYR\\_PressRelease\\_en.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/press/IPCC_AR6_SYR_PressRelease_en.pdf)

2. Immediately prohibit all new fossil fuel projects, exploration and expansion of existing projects.
3. Immediately prohibit all new gas connections: residential, commercial and industrial.
4. Legislate the target of a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 across all sectors (real, not offset or traded with credits) as urged by the IPCC.
5. Legislate for the electrification of all buildings and closure of all residential gas networks by 2040 at the latest.
6. Legislate for the electrification of all commercial gas use by 2035 and industrial gas use by 2050 or substitution with non-fossil fuels for applications that cannot be electrified.
7. Legislate for the phase-out of all fossil fuels in electricity generation by 2035 at the latest, coal by 2030.
8. Develop action plans and allocate funding to achieve all of the above, prioritising electrification of low-income and vulnerable households.
9. Fund transition of the fossil fuel workforce through skills training.
10. Immediately prohibit fossil fuel industry lobbying, advertising, sponsorships and political donations.
11. Rewrite the Future Gas Strategy from scratch, without vested interests, to reflect all of the above.