

29 March 2021

Gas Taskforce
Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
Australian Government
Via online submission form

Submission to the Gas Fired Recovery Plan Consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Department of Industry Science, Energy and Resources' request for submissions to help it 'understand issues that require consideration in developing measures' to address 'the Australian Government's vision for a gas-fired recovery'.

The Federal Government inquiry is the first opportunity Australian citizens have had to formally submit their views to the government about its proposal for a 'gas fired recovery'. Unfortunately, the current terms of this inquiry presuppose the value of such a project and requests advice on the means to achieve it. But citizens ('the stakeholders') have a responsibility to consider means in relations to goals and values. The consideration of 'the issues' in this submission is thus not restricted to the means for achieving the gas fired recovery, but centres on the context, scope, impact and merit of a gas fired recovery.

Gas supply as a 'transition fuel'

Much of the discussion about the 'gas fired recovery' has centred on gas as a transition fuel and, notwithstanding the views of the chief scientist, there are [strong arguments](#) that the days of [gas as a transition fuel have passed](#). The combination of sustainable and cheaper substitutes - hydro, renewables and firming batteries have rendered investment in new gas plants and infrastructure economically, let alone, environmentally, [unsound](#). Each federal government claim for the necessity of a new gas plant seems to be met by an [announcement of a big battery](#) that will do at least an equivalent energy job without the emission consequences.

Yet it also seems true to say that the Federal government promotion of a gas fired recovery has also retarded renewable investment in Australia. It has led to recent [decreasing investment in renewables](#) as well as the opportunity lost to develop new future facing environmentally sustainable industries based on renewables. The urgent necessity to address the climate crisis, [reckoned by the IPCC](#) to require an eight percent annual reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, should lead even a reluctantly interventionist government not to subsidize gas as a transitional fuel but to intervene in the market to accelerate the rapid take-up of grid scale renewables.

Gas supply as an export commodity

The proposed gas fired recovery through the five basins' plans is also providing public funding to support massive gas expansion which will create enormous emissions, impact

communities and thwart the uptake of renewables. This dimension of the gas fired recovery in its global and human consequences needs to be more front and centre in the consideration of the gas fired recovery. As noted in the Review's Gas Reservation Issues Paper, exports of LNG from the Australian continent are already the world's largest and this is without the massive extraction planned for the Australian continent, both offshore and onshore. To cite two examples: the Burrup Peninsula, ([35 coal fired power plant equivalent of annual emissions for 50 years](#)) and the Barrossa Offshore project in the Timor Sea, ([equivalent to 2GW power stations of annual emissions for 25 years](#)) gives a hint of the scale of gas expansion proposed and there are similarly sized other projects in Western Australia, the Beetaloo Basin and for Bowen and Galilee Basin in Queensland. Federal Government funding support for these projects with their attendant [massive fugitive emissions](#) will blowout even Australia's very weak Paris commitments. While emission sequestration is touted by gas expansion proponents as a silver bullet to address this problem, [it remains a pipedream](#) and marketing spin. In addition, at the scale proposed, massive gas exports will lower the price of gas on the world stage and so retard the take-up of substitute [renewables throughout the world](#).

The deleterious impact that gas developments will have on the environment that communities depend upon for their continuation ([both indigenous](#) and [more recently settled](#)) is well known. The peril to our global climate and future when the export dimension of the gas fired recovery is properly taken into account cannot be overstated.

Gas expansion unjustifiable even on narrow economic grounds

It may be argued that even in an ever-gathering global climate crisis, the economic benefits to Australia outweigh these considerations. However, even on narrow economic grounds, economists have pointed out these benefits have been overplayed. It may be that gas exports have created massive profits for global gas corporations exporting from Australia (the \$40 billion gas export industry) but as economists have noted, most do not pay tax and the [employment in the industry is very low](#).

The future economic prospects for gas exports may also be [far from rosy](#) given the likely rapid decrease as key global customers (China, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia) for LNG exports emanating from Australia switch to renewable energy [following commitments to net zero carbon emissions by 2050](#). The added pressure of trade barriers to carbon intensive manufactured goods commencing in Europe in 2023 but likely to be expanded to other central manufacturing jurisdictions (USA, China Japan) as those states decarbonise is expected to turn [declarations into hard economic realities](#). In this context, the impact of federal government funding to promote and provide public funding support for global corporations' gas expansion plans, even on narrow economic grounds, is highly suspect.

So overwhelming are these issues it is difficult to comprehend how the Governments 'vision of a gas fired recovery' could proceed without their consideration. It seems as if government is simply screening out these vital considerations as if they simply do not exist.

Of course, as experts committed to a rapid renewable transition repeatedly acknowledge, some gas will be required as part of that transition. However, the critical thing is that the centrepiece of government planning must not be to massively expand gas extraction, but

rather to plan a rapid renewable led recovery and future. In a world where an eight percent annual reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is required to keep that world liveable, governments necessarily must lead in steering decarbonization. As experts also make clear, this is not a recipe for economic decline but indeed, with early adoption, an opportunity for economic and [environmental sustainability](#). In summary, the recommendation of this submission is that the Federal government replace the project of a 'gas fired recovery' with a project for a renewable led, just, recovery, a project that should include a timetable for the elimination of both domestic and exported greenhouse gas emissions.

Peter Moraitis
1 Baker St St Kilda
Victoria 3182