

Victoria State Government

Help build Victoria's Gas Substitution Roadmap Consultation Paper

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to this important initiative.
The consultation paper provides a clear and helpful outline of the uses and issues.

It leads me to these conclusions:

The biggest opportunity lies in increasing energy efficiency of houses, and to a lesser extent other dwellings, to reduce winter energy consumption. This has major additional benefits, as it should also decrease summer energy use. It's also a good covid recovery stimulus, if you can find the tradies to do it with the Federal Government sucking up all the spare capacity. Like Pink Batts but with better controls and less risk to government if you have the house-holders given the grant and then having to account for it.

There is plenty of existing expertise to tap to set up a Statewide program - [Tim Forcey](#) is a major source but focussed on electrification. While electrification is very important, as a single-focus program it would likely be less effective for reducing gas consumption than simply better insulation and guidance about how to reduce energy use and thus save money.

This is a well-trodden path but deserves more effort, perhaps via partnerships with Local Government. If you give the allocation to Local Government then they carry any risk and have to deal with the accountability.

The key, as always, is funding with a pathway that is not just grants but information provided by a trusted source, which requires a personnel workforce and workshops at a local level. Local Government is the logical delivery agency.

The next biggest opportunity is electrification of space heating, especially residential. The delivery method is the same. The technology, reverse cycle and better, heat pumps, is available and being subsidised already. It just needs better program delivery methods.

A big centralised social marketing campaign should be very effective if matched with grants. *Getting off gas saves you money, it's better for health, it mitigates climate change. Gas is very expensive, it's not natural, it's mined like coal, it's a fossil fuel but invisible. If you count the carbon emissions in production as well as burning it's often as bad as burning coal for damaging the climate.*

Heat pumps also integrate well as a program marketing objective with roof-top solar and getting off gas for water heating.

All these elements can be combined in a single campaign.

Incentives for switching to heat pumps for commercial and larger-scale operations

Heat pumps are also now the technology of choice for larger-scale uses, commercial buildings and recreation centres, even swimming pools. There is a large capital cost but considerable savings in energy consumption. The logical approach would seem to be to underwrite the capital cost via no-interest loan for retro-fitting and allow pay-back equivalent to the calculated savings. I apologise if this is already in play.

Synchronising programs to mitigate grid stress

If these two efforts are synchronised, the grid issues arising from the switch to electric heating should be mitigated by the increase in energy efficiency.

If they are done well, gas supply issues are well mitigated if not eliminated.

Equity considerations

There are always equity considerations. They mesh with the objective of minimising gas use. Make the subsidies bigger for the less advantaged. To encourage uptake in rental properties, allow reduced land tax for uptake and/or partner with Local Government for rate reduction allowances. Partnership with Local Government has the synergistic advantage of bringing them along on the journey to net zero.

Green hydrogen for industry

Reducing industrial gas use needs new technologies. Green hydrogen seems to be the one with the most promise, but it will take a while. There's a pilot plant in South Australia that is, among other things, introducing it into the local gas network, but this is somewhat fraught, as its acceptance can be a gateway for use of blue and brown hydrogen.

It is surely a good thing to progress this industry and it will surely become established over time as an export industry. **However, the main game for reducing gas dependency is reducing residential and commercial gas use.**

Leigh Naunton



I live, work and play on the land of the Wurundjeri people - land which was stolen from them, and to which they have never ceded sovereignty. I pay my respects to their rights, traditions and elders past, present and emerging.