

To Victoria's Gas Substitution Roadmap Consultation,  
The Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning  
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August 2021

**RESPONSE BY EXTINCTION REBELLION [Darebin Group]**



To whom it may concern,

Thank you for taking submissions on this vitally important issue.

This response is put forward by the Darebin group of Extinction Rebellion, a decentralised non-partisan movement that aims to use non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to persuade Governments and corporations to take action on the climate and ecological emergency because:

*"We are facing a man-made disaster on a global scale. Our greatest threat in thousands of years" Sir David Attenborough, Katowice, Poland, 3 Dec. 2018.*

In light of the extreme urgency of the climate emergency we are open to tackling this crisis on all fronts and by all means. Therefore we are putting forward this submission on the Victorian Governments Gas Substitution Road Map for your consideration.

We know there is no time left to dally around with transitions that either sustain or extend existing fossil fuels, including "natural" gas. This also means attempts to continue to use fossil fuels with tricky, unproven technology, such as carbon capture and storage, should not be put forward as "solutions"

The International Energy Agency's latest Roadmap for the energy sector confirms the critical urgency, while also boosting the renewable energy future:

*"We are approaching a decisive moment for international efforts to tackle the climate crisis a great challenge of our times. The IEA's pathway to this brighter future brings a historic surge in clean energy investment that creates millions of new jobs and lifts global economic growth. It sets out a cost-effective and economically productive pathway, resulting in a clean, dynamic and resilient energy economy dominated by renewables like solar and wind instead of fossil fuels."*

**GAS CAN BE REPLACED BY RENEWABLES**

*"Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible."* St. Francis of Assisi

*"Climate change is now reaching the end-game, where very soon humanity must choose between taking unprecedented action or accepting that it has been left too late and bear the consequences."*

Professor Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, Potsdam Institute of Climate Impact, 2018,

The Victorian Gas Substitution Roadmap Consultation paper claims to set *"ambitious targets to reduce emissions by 28-33 per cent by 2025 and 45-50 per cent by 2030 "*

Firstly, the government's proposed targets are *not* ambitious. This timeline actually makes light of the speed at which Schellnhuber and other eminent scientists insist we must change. The crisis we face demands much more rapid change. We need to act as St Francis of Assisi urges us to. We will never get to the impossible if we dawdle along with incremental changes.

Victoria powered its electricity grid with 25 percent renewable energy in late 2020, This is a beginning but with incentives and more support for large renewable energy systems the state could move to 100 percent very quickly, It is useful to note that on December 27 2020 99.6 percent of South Australia's electricity was sourced from the sun or wind. Victoria should also be able to do this

Critically, if the above targets were even serious why would the Victorian Government lift its moratorium on new gas exploration? Any new gas production will drive up emissions not reduce them!

## **GAS IS NOT A SAFE TRANSITION FUEL**

Gas is a non-renewable resource and a fossil fuel. Even before it is burned to create energy gas production processes release vast quantities of carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere at every stage of its supply chain. In the short-term, methane warms the atmosphere much more than carbon dioxide; over 20 years, methane has around 86 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide. (Bill Gates' book "How to Avoid a Climate Disaster" gives a figure of more than 200 times.)

It should not be considered in a program that counts towards the lowering of Victorian State emissions.

We have noted that the Road Map aims to include, "A study to identify opportunities to reduce fugitive emissions across the natural gas supply chain"

This is more of an aim to waste time and money as the easiest way to reduce fugitive emissions is to reduce the use of gas in the first instance.

A group of 25 of Australia's most eminent scientists published an open letter to the Chief Scientist in the Journal & Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales in November 2020. It included this highly relevant comment:

*"Our concern, however, relates to the scale and speed of the decarbonisation challenge required to meet the Paris Agreement, and, in particular, your support for the use of gas as a transition fuel over 'many decades'. Unfortunately, that approach is not consistent with a safe climate nor, more specifically, with the Paris Agreement. There is no role for an expansion of the gas industry.*

*The combustion of natural gas is now the fastest growing source of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, the most important greenhouse gas driving climate change.*

*Global methane emissions from fossil fuel sources and from agriculture are accelerating.*

*On a decadal timeframe, methane is a far more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. In Australia, the rapid rise in methane emissions is due to the expansion of the natural gas industry".*

It makes no sense to aim to retire the polluting coal-fired plants and build new gas plants. This strategy simply extends the timeframe for fossil fuels.

## **HYDROGEN, BIOMETHANE AND CARBON CAPTURE AND STORAGE**

*"Every crisis contains both danger and opportunity. Today I believe we have to slow down our rate of production and consumption and to learn to understand and contemplate the natural world." Pope Francis*

There is an opportunity in this crisis to adapt and explore genuine alternatives that work with nature rather than exploit it.

Victoria has great potential for both Solar and Wind. Off-shore wind, in particular is under-utilised and not sufficiently supported. Renewable projects such as Star of the South are ready to go and should be prioritised.



The use of untested and unrealistic technologies such as carbon capture and storage as a first option and initiative seems foolish. It is risky and has not been proven to work effectively. Its false promise should not be used to prop up the reliance on existing fossil fuels.

## **REPLACEMENT OF GAS APPLIANCES WITH ELECTRIC IN HOUSEHOLDS, BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY**

Currently Victorian is the largest consumer of gas in the east-coast market. Victoria accounts for more than one-third (37%) of Australia's domestic (local) gas consumption. 61% of this occurs in residential and commercial (non-industrial) settings.

Hence one of the simplest way to clean up our GHG emissions is to help those households replace their gas-fuelled appliances. The Government has a mechanism called the Victorian Energy Upgrades that could and should be used for incentives for households and business to transition to electric appliances that can be fuelled by renewable energy.

Currently the

*“VEU supports households and businesses to install energy efficient equipment or switch to appliances that create less emissions.”*

Unfortunately this scheme at present provides more incentives for households and business to exchange electric appliances for gas where the incentives should be flowing in the opposite direction.

For example there are large subsidies to exchange electric space room heaters with gas heaters but no subsidies to move from the very common gas-fired boilers to hydronic systems with electric heat pumps.

There are incentives to replace a *“Central electric heater or Inefficient ducted gas heater with a Efficient ducted gas heater”*. Efficient or not this is still a move in the wrong direction.

This matter is particularly important as the consultation paper reports that 74% of residential gas use in Victoria is consumed for space heating. This is therefore an excellent opportunity to make a large reduction in residential gas consumption.

The incentive to install more gas-fuelled appliances encourages both the use and production of these appliances thereby entrenching and enhancing this industry rather than supporting the transition to renewable industry. All these appliances will become stranded assets in short order as fossil fuels such as gas are phased out.

In 2007, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon said, “This is an emergency and for emergency situations we need emergency action”

At that time Greta Thunberg was four-years-old. Now the situation is even more serious. The limited time remaining for emergency action is even more precious. As Thunberg pleads, “I want you to act as if our house is on fire, because it is.”

Thank you for considering this brief submission

In Love and Rage

Extinction Rebellion Darebin

