

Paying to prop up coal-fired power stations

October 2021

God calls us to live in harmony with our natural environment and to seek justice and well-being for all creation.

The Synod resolves to acknowledge the need for immediate and substantial action by governments, businesses and communities, including the councils and institutions of the church in this Synod, to mitigate climate change caused by human activity and the threat it poses to God's good creation.

Synod of Victoria and Tasmania resolution from February 2021

While society and most businesses are now moving to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to stave off the worst impacts of climate change, the Commonwealth Government continues to want to intervene to prop up the ongoing use of fossil fuels.

One of the latest moves is to try and introduce a Physical Retailer Reliability Obligation which would require energy retailers to have to provide payments to electricity generators to ensure there is spare capacity in the electricity grid. Maintaining reliability in the electricity grid is essential. The Commonwealth Government's plan does include payments supporting some positive sources, such as large scale batteries, pumped hydro energy storage and electricity demand management to smooth out electricity demand.

However, they also want electricity retailers to make payments to keep coal-fired power stations and gas plants open longer than their market life. Analysis by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis and Green Energy Markets estimated the measure could cost between \$2.9 billion and \$6.9 billion a year. That would add between \$182 and \$430 to average household electricity bills each year.

The plan requires the support of state governments. The Victorian and ACT Governments has stated they will oppose the plan. The NSW Government publicly expressed hesitation in supporting the measure.

What You Can Do

Write polite and respectful letters to:

The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio
Minister for Energy, Environment and
Climate Change
Level 16, 8 Nicholson Street
East Melbourne, VIC 3002

The Hon. Daniel Andrews, MP
The Premier of Victoria
1 Treasury Place
Melbourne Victoria 3002

Salutation: Dear Premier

Salutation: Dear Minister

Points to make in your letters:

- Thank the Victorian Government for opposing the part of the proposed Physical Retailer Reliability Obligation that would prop up the life of coal-fired power stations and gas plants.

The Hon Peter Gutwein

Premier
11th Floor, Executive Building
15 Murray Street
Hobart, 7000

Salutation: Dear Premier

Points to make in your letters:

- Express concern that Australia is already lagging on the necessary contribution that it needs to be making to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Note that State Governments have been taking the lead in action on climate change compared to the Commonwealth Government.
- Consistent with leading action on climate change, ask that the Tasmanian Government oppose any inclusion of subsidies to keep coal-fired power stations and gas plants open through the Physical Retailer Reliability Obligation or another mechanism that artificially extends their operating life.

Turning off the Gas in WA

October 2021

“As a church, we care deeply about the environment and the most vulnerable in our community... Given we have had rising emissions in WA over recent years mainly due to the gas industry, it is troubling to see no requirements or a clear plan for reducing emissions from that sector in particular.

Susy Thomas, Moderator, Uniting Church WA

The WA State Government has made some important steps towards a lower carbon future, but risks undoing their good work by approving more gas developments.

According to a joint report by the Australia Institute and the Conservation Council WA, the Scarborough to Pluto LNG project off the Pilbara coast is the most polluting fossil fuel project currently proposed in Australia. Their analysis suggests that the project would result in annual carbon pollution equal to over 15 new coal-fired power stations or over 1.69 billion tonnes (gigatonnes) of CO₂ over the project's lifetime. That is more pollution than the proposed Adani coal mine.

Even without this latest project, the rapid expansion in LNG production in Western Australia is already a significant source of increasing carbon pollution. While all other states' emissions are falling, WA's have risen by 23% since 2005, with emissions from current WA LNG facilities making up 36% of WA's total annual emissions (as of October 2019).

When the world is shifting to make dramatic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to keep within safe climate limits, it is irresponsible to approve projects with such significant impacts. This is especially the case when the environmental approvals for the Scarborough project did not assess carbon pollution or other environmental impacts, including potential damage to the Murujuga Aboriginal heritage site proposed for World Heritage listing.

Furthermore, the WA State Government has recently been granting approvals to onshore gas projects in the Mid-West and the Kimberley, which further impacts the local communities and environment.

Shaun Clark, from Broome-based Environs Kimberley, was disappointed to see an export exemption granted to a Texas-based fracking company saying, “The Western Australian Environmental Protection Authority has not even finished assessing this project, yet somehow now Black Mountain has an export permit,” he said.

"This decision is effectively a green light by the McGowan government for thousands of gas fracking wells across the world-renowned Kimberley landscapes. We know that once fracking companies gain a foothold in a region, they expand like spiderwebs across the landscape.”

What You Can Do

Write polite and respectful letters to:

Hon. Amber-Jade Sanderson MLA
Minister for Environment; Climate Action
Level 5, Dumas House,
2 Havelock Street,
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Hon. Mark McGowan MLA
The Premier of Western Australia
13th Floor, Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Salutation: Dear Minister

Salutation: Dear Premier

Points to make in your letters:

- Thank the WA Government for including a \$750 million Climate Action Fund in its latest budget, along with the recent announcement to end native forest logging and commitments for a hydrogen energy industry.
- Express concern that Western Australia is already lagging behind on the necessary contribution that it needs to be making to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Note that WA's emissions have been rising over recent years when they need to be decreasing.
- Request that no further approvals be granted to fossil fuel projects to ensure our alignment with the science behind global commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.