



Retirement Plan needed to get off gas in Victoria for the sake of our health and the health of the planet

July 2023

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

Climate change is already causing severe harm to the lives of hundreds of millions of people across the globe – the science is clear. Climate change will cause increased extreme weather events (floods, droughts, heat waves), rising sea levels and loss of food production.

Addressing human-induced climate change will require a sustained global effort over decades. Actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions made now will take decades to reduce the harm caused by climate change. However, failing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions now will lock the planet into further climate change, with catastrophic climate-related damage.

Victoria's gas sector makes up around 17% of the net greenhouse gas emissions for the state. Gas is used in the homes and businesses of over two million Victorians, which makes Victoria the most gas-dependent jurisdiction of any state or territory in Australia.¹ Approximately 80% of Victorian homes are connected to gas. Eliminating the use of gas will play a role in future decarbonising efforts. The objective will be the electrification of businesses and households from renewable sources.

Gas is also unhealthy. Cooking with gas has been estimated to be responsible for up to 12% of childhood asthma in Australia². A child living with gas cooking in the home faces a comparable risk of asthma to a child living in a household with cigarette smoke.

In July 2022, Victoria released its [Gas Substitution Roadmap](#) as part of its plan to achieve net zero emissions for the state.³ It contains several important commitments, including abolishing the requirement that new housing developments be connected to the gas network. It also moves state buildings off gas. The Victorian Government announced \$5.1 million in the May 2023 budget to progress the Roadmap. Unfortunately, the Roadmap falls short of committing to a post-gas future for Victoria. It holds the door open for future gas production licences to be approved, new gas pipelines to be built, and gas import terminals to be established in Corio Bay and Port Phillip.

The Victorian Government is taking the positive step of bringing back the State Electricity Commission (SEC). In the May 2023 budget, it announced \$1 billion in funding for the SEC to deliver 4.5 GW of power in renewable energy projects. That is enough to produce the same amount of electricity as Loy Yang A power station in the Latrobe Valley.

An analysis published by Environment Victoria in March 2023 found that closing coal-fired power stations in Victoria will not be enough for the Victorian Government to reach its target

¹ <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/victorias-gas-substitution-roadmap>

² <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/gas-habit-how-gas-harming-health/#aa>

³ Lily D'Ambrosio, Victorian Minister for Energy, 'Gas Roadmap Drives Down Energy Bills And Emissions', Media Release, 1 July 2022.



of a 75 to 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2035. Reducing the use of gas is a priority if the target is to be met. If the current gas consumption rate continues, then gas burned in Victorian homes and small businesses will be responsible for between 29% and 37% of Victorian emissions by 2035.

There has been good news nationally, with the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) making it easier for people to get their gas disconnected. The AER has capped the fees corporations can charge a household to disconnect from gas at \$220. Previously, gas supply corporations were charging up to \$1,100 for a home to disconnect from gas as a means to deter people from disconnecting from gas. High disconnection fees are the kind of tactics corporations that profit from gas are willing to resort to in order to protect their profits at our expense.

There is a need for us to make our voice heard by the Victorian Government asking them to get rid of gas for the sake of our health and the health of the planet. The Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association (APPEA), which represents the largely multinational gas corporations, has mounted an advertising campaign to support their lobbying in defence of their members' profits. Gas corporations continue to put their desire to maximise their profits ahead of the well-being of our communities and the planet. By writing letters to the Victorian Government, you can make it clear you do not support the self-interest of the gas corporations.

What You Can Do

Write polite and respectful letters to:

The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio
Minister for Climate Action
Minister for Energy and Resources
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 developing its Gas Substitution Roadmap. However, point out that more rapid action is required to get Victoria off gas dependence that locks in unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions for decades to come.
- Ask the Victorian Government to:
 - Legislate to end further exploration for new gas deposits onshore and offshore;
 - Develop a concrete plan to retire the gas mains system by 2035, backed by funding to assist households and businesses in moving to electricity for their energy needs provided by renewable sources. Support needs to be particularly targeted to low-income households and renters who will struggle most to afford to upgrade their homes to become all-electric; and,
 - Prohibit new residential and commercial gas connections to ensure that the number of properties dependent on gas as an energy source continues to decline.

In addition to writing letters, you can take the Friends of the Earth Get off Gas Pledge (at <https://getoffgas.org.au>) to tell the Victorian Government you want assistance to get off gas for good. For further information on this issue, also see: <https://grattan.edu.au/report/getting-off-gas/>

