



Voters Must Say No To Labor's Naïve Plan To Make Victoria Nearly Totally Reliant On Green Energy By 2035

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While the Coalition want to increase gas supply and combat ever-climbing electricity prices, Labor have presented voters with a plan to turn back the clock and – for one – expose Australia to hostile foreign energy suppliers.

Victoria has struggled through a lost decade of energy policy.

That conclusion is best demonstrated by the exponential rise in the cost of Victorian families' utility bills and threats to energy supplies.

As Victorians head to the polls on November 26, the major parties have sought to leverage energy and rising bills to woo voters at the ballot box, each with distinct policy offerings.



In an attempt to unseat the Andrews Labor Government, the Victorian Coalition has put its focus on increasing gas supply and combating ever-climbing electricity prices.

Labor on the other hand have presented voters with a plan to turn back the clock and re-nationalise Victoria's energy system.

Daniel Andrews' plan to bring Victoria's energy market back under state control through the re-introduction of the State Electricity Commission – discreetly announced during the recent flood crisis – also had a nasty sting in the tail as it was coupled with a commitment to increase the state-wide renewable energy target to 95 per cent by 2035.

This would see a re-elected Andrews Government abandon Victorian coal and gas entirely, in a time of great uncertainty abroad.

It would also represent a devastating attack on the finances of Victorian families and small businesses already struggling to make ends meet due to further price rises on top of record high energy costs.

The brutal invasion of Ukraine by Russia has exposed how reliance on foreign sources of energy is a threat not just to energy security, but national security.

European reliance on Russian gas has all but ruined the continent's "green dreams".

In July, the European Union was forced to recognise natural gas as a "green" source of energy.

Germany in the meantime has been racing to reopen closed coal-fired power stations just to keep the lights on as the supply of gas from Putin's Russia is cut.

If Victoria pursues Daniel Andrews' vision of renewable domination in the energy market, it will increase both the state and Australia's exposure to increasingly hostile foreign energy suppliers.

Today, more than 80 per cent of Australia's renewable infrastructure is manufactured abroad, with China projected to control 95 per cent of the world's solar panel production by 2025.

The Victorian Coalition's energy policy has taken a different tact, with its energy centrepiece to mandate that all new gas discovered in Victoria be used in households and manufacturing within the state, with a clear focus on conventional onshore gas.

Opposition Leader Matt Guy is right to point out that electricity and gas prices will not decrease without a greater supply of natural gas.

Removing red tape, bans, and bureaucratic impediments on conventional onshore gas exploration and development is an important step in the right direction.

In the 2020 Geological Survey of Victoria, it is estimated there are between 128 to 830 petajoules of onshore conventional gas in Victoria.



According to the Commonwealth Department of Energy, a single petajoule of natural gas could power 43,216 homes for a year, meaning the Coalition's initiative could provide enough energy to power every Victorian home for 15 years.

This is a promising start, but Victorians need this vision to be bolder.

Only by harnessing so-called "unconventional gas supplies" will Victoria once again reclaim its mantle as a manufacturing and industrial powerhouse.

Yet accessing this gas was banned in Victoria's Constitution last year by the Andrews Government.

This folly followed on from the moratorium on all onshore gas that was put in place by the thoroughly lamentable Baillieu Liberal Government in 2012.

According to Geoscience Australia, in the Gippsland Basin alone, there are 19.2 trillion cubic feet of unconventional natural gas.

That is equivalent to 879 million petajoules, which could power every home in Australia for the next 94 years!

The warning signs exposing the perilous state of our energy supply are already there and deeply troubling.

This year, the Australian Energy Market Operator issued a warning that Victoria's gas supply would be dangerously low throughout our coldest months.

Worse still, on the first day of winter 2022, AEMO made the extraordinary assessment that rationing gas may be required in response to shortages and explosive price hikes on the wholesale market.

Just days later AEMO took the unprecedented step of shutting down the operation of the National Energy Market.

In order to provide long-term certainty for gas supplies, the Coalition should commit to reversing the ban on the exploration and development of all onshore gas deposits.

Even Federal Labor Minister for Resources Madeleine King recognises that Victoria's ban on unconventional gas is a significant barrier to solving Victoria and Australia's energy crisis.

Winding back the clock to re-nationalise Victoria's energy system and rushing to force unreliable and experimental renewable energy to hold up the state's electricity supply is a recipe for disaster.

Matthew Guy and the Coalition have a real opportunity to seize the moment and build a substantial policy platform that could effectively deliver affordable, reliable and secure energy that will make a measurable difference to the lives of every Victorian.



Will Victorians flick the switch on election day?