

Towards 2050: Gas infrastructure in a zero emissions economy

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council Submission

12 Aug 2021

To whom it may concern,

The Mornington Peninsula Shire Council supports the development of this interim report Towards 2050: Gas infrastructure in a zero emissions economy, and any initiative that aids delivery of our adopted target of net zero community emissions by 2040, as part of the plan developed [Ensuring Our Future: Our Climate Emergency Response](#).

The Shire supports a balanced and evidence-based approach and is technology agnostic as to how net zero carbon is achieved. As noted in the report, there are significant uncertainties in the technology, infrastructure, cost, and benefit, and so the most prudent approach is to fully investigate each opportunity.

The Shire also strongly advocates for urgent action to reach net zero emissions. There are solutions available today to rapidly decarbonise our energy sector and investigating all opportunities should not preclude the necessity of urgent action today. To this end, the Shire supports clear overarching gas emissions targets, and interim targets to guide the efforts required.

The price of gas is fluctuating and with demand changes and supply limitations of this finite resource the prices are likely to continue to increase. In terms of household usage, an all-electric home using efficient equipment is already cheaper to run than a dual-fuel home, a home connected to both electricity and gas, in most cases. Refer to page 46 [Flame Out: the future of natural gas, Grattan Institute 2020, and Household fuel choice in the National Energy Market, Alternative Technology Association 2018](#).

Our position is based on extensive community engagement over the several recent years, most recently for the development of our Climate Emergency Plan in mid-2020. This Plan was on public exhibition for five weeks of proactive community consultation. During this time extensive feedback was received including:

- 645 survey responses
- 21 detailed written responses
- two commissioned expert reports
- and other expert reports.

The community feedback regarding gas related references in the Climate Emergency Plan was consistent. It either supported the proposed wording or requested stronger wording from 'limiting gas use' to 'phasing out gas'. As Council does not have the remit to do this, other than for our own buildings, the aspirational vision referred to as the 'View From the Top' was included in the Plan ... *increase in renewable energy such as solar and wind power, phasing out gas and improving energy efficiency in our buildings*. This statement was what the community told us and reflects our community's aspirations. There is a clear social mandate for a rapid decarbonisation of our energy grid and economy.

Additionally, in July 2021 Council was presented with a [Community Vision](#) created by a representative Citizens Panel of community members. The vision strongly aligned to our Climate Emergency Plan, and aims for a sustainable, vibrant and prosperous future. More than 3000 responses from community members were received in the development of the Vision. The first principle included is '*Addressing Climate Change, to take a proactive stance on climate change through initiatives that support decarbonisation and renewable energy with a set of given targets*'.

Our community has raised several specific concerns, summarised as follows:

- that energy must be affordable, reliable, and safe for all users, particularly following the extended power outages from recent storms
- vulnerable populations and communities need to be included, e.g. via communications and programs aimed at reducing capital cost inequalities
- a fair and just transition for our community and businesses

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Based on the overview and modelling under each of the scenarios identified, the Shire prefers Scenario C. This scenario represents:

- Lowest absolute carbon emissions
- High potential for job creation
- Minimal reliance on CCS technology, which has a significant risk of being unreliable
- High resilience from diversifying and not relying on one technology

It should be noted that support for this scenario is based on the benefits outlined in the report, and not the specific technologies identified. Further research and investigation investment is essential to ensure the rapid transition required is effective, low-cost, fair and just.

The Shire also supports the 'no regrets' measure of energy efficiency and would recommend introducing actions around behaviour change as well. Behaviour change supports avoiding gas usage, which should be the highest priority before considering efficiency, as noted in the carbon mitigation hierarchy. The behaviour change would largely consist of community and business education programs, though there are significant opportunities in reviewing processes and procedures.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melissa Burrage".

Melissa Burrage
Manager Climate Change and Sustainability