

ENERGY — DOMESTIC GAS POLICY

Statement

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [5.50 pm]: My member's statement tonight is about energy and a couple of announcements this week that might have gone under the radar. I start with one around the domestic gas policy. An announcement was made this week on domestic gas and how it impacts on fracking in our area. Peter Milne wrote an article in WAtoday a couple of days ago titled "WA quietly shuts door on onshore gas". It states —

There was no government media announcement for the policy change, just a low-profile "public notice" ... by Premier Roger Cook ...

That in many ways might seem uncontroversial, and the idea that we are going to stop exporting gas from the Perth Basin I think we all agree is a sensible decision. The bit that concerns me and I want to bring to people's attention is that we might read from that that only offshore gas in territory waters is what gets exported. That is not true. The Canning Basin is the one domestic onshore exception to this. This came to light when Environs Kimberley, which does great work in the Kimberley in this space, wrote to the domgas policy team to ask the very question: has there been a policy change, because the 2020 policy prevented the export of local gas to the eastern states and overseas, and what does the new policy mean? I got a response back that I will read verbatim. It reads, according to my notes —

Hi Martin,

As the Canning Basin is not connected to the existing pipeline network a normal application of the WA Domestic Gas Policy applies, meaning exports are permitted on the basis 15% of these volumes are made available to the domestic market.

The application of the Policy to the Canning Basin is same as the application to offshore developments.

Kind regards,

WA Domgas Policy Team

On one level, we might ask what is the concern around that. But if the export of gas was previously banned from the Canning Basin, which is certainly understood by Environs Kimberley, and by the export of gas, I mean fracking was previously banned in the Canning Basin, now all of a sudden there has been a change in policy that has largely gone under the radar that could have serious impacts for that region. On one level one might say that this is just an environment group stirring up a bit of concern around fracking in the Kimberley, but I draw members' attention to a press release that came out today from Buru Energy, which, interestingly, was the very first company to have a fracking well in the Kimberley. It was quite excited by this change to the WA gas policy. In fact, the press release is called "Buru welcomes WA Domestic Gas Policy". I will quote a few little bits from it —

Western Australian Domestic Gas Policy update by Government further enhances Rafael resource development pathway by confirming the potential for export of onshore gas from the Canning Basin with 15% reserved for the domestic market.

Buru's CEO, Thomas Nador, goes on to say —

"Buru welcomes the added certainty the updated Domestic Gas Policy brings to its Rafael gas and condensate development.

The Canning Basin is not connected to an existing pipeline network. By confirming the project is able to export gas in the future provides Buru with strategic optionality to develop Rafael, and significantly enhances the attractiveness of the project to potential development partners.

This week, kind of under the radar, it appears that we have moved one step closer to fracking in the Kimberley. To me, that feels like a pretty significant shift in energy policy in this state. It should not be merely buried not even in a media statement but on a website. It came out only through the Australian Securities Exchange announcement by Buru Energy and some well-asked questions by Environs Kimberley.

This is of real concern because, if it goes ahead, it will have really severe consequences for the Kimberley. Let me give members an example. Black Mountain, another company up there and a Texan fracking company, has proposed a pipeline to the Kimberley, most likely to Woodside's Burrup hub, but to make that work, it will need 1 200 fracking wells, which would need to go from the heart of the Kimberley through the Fitzroy River, through the National Heritage List area and through a registered Aboriginal heritage site. That is what will need to happen. The green light appears to be on for the first time to open up this amazing area. I think that anyone who has been to the Kimberley would see it as extraordinary. The idea that that area will be opened up to thousands of oil and gas fracking wells should concern us all.

So far there have been only three wells. They have all had problems and they have all been pretty poorly monitored. A question asked in this place during the Barnett government showed that the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety did no well inspections for seven years. The idea that the WA government is in a position to regulate hundreds, if not thousands, of wells is of grave concern. My vision for the Kimberley is that we build on the amazing Aboriginal cultural heritage and the amazing \$500-million tourism industry that should be based in that place, and we do not turn it into an industrial landscape that not only destroys the place, but also adds to destroying our climate.

The climate part is really important here. Some work has been done by Climate Analytics, an extremely credible climate research organisation. If fracking in the Kimberley were to proceed, Climate Analytics has said that this development would lead to the equivalent of 2.5 gigatonnes of CO₂ over 20 years, compared with Australia's Paris agreement budget of 3.6 gigatonnes. It would be 70 per cent of Australia's entire carbon budget. To put that another way, it would actually be the equivalent of doubling Western Australia's emissions every year if we let this proceed. Despite all the hard work we are doing around essential emissions reductions and bringing our emissions down, we will do this so we can destroy the Kimberley, open up fracking and export things through this place. It is a bad idea on so many levels. This government did the right thing by banning fracking in the south west, Perth, Peel and the Dampier Peninsula. Why is it still all right in the Kimberley? It should be banned there as well for many, many reasons.

In the last 50 seconds I have left, I will mention a second part to this energy story. This week, of course, we saw an announcement that Muja power station will stay open a while longer. It was an interesting announcement that somehow managed to avoid mentioning at any point that Muja is a coal-fired power station. We will see a coal-fired power station staying open for an extra summer. That comes back to something I have said again and again in this place: it is because we are not investing quickly enough in renewable energy. I note that Hon Dr Steve Thomas —

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: It is staying open until a month after the next state election, honourable member, funnily enough. Pardon my cynicism.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: It is to stay open longer. We should make sure that we are investing in wind and transmission, and speeding up that transition. The fact that we are now dragging out how long our coal-fired power stations are staying open is another reason that we are not doing this energy transition right.