

**The North West Shelf decision proves politics is failing our children
– it's up to the next Parliament to fix it.**

As parents, we do everything we can to give our children the best chance in life. We assume our governments will support us to do the same. However, for the first time in modern history, young people today are forecast to be worse off than their parents.

Our children, grandchildren and the young people of Australia will inherit a world shaped by converging crises. Climate breakdown. Environmental degradation. A housing crisis. Mental health epidemics. Rising chronic disease. Growing inequality, and of course, worsening intergenerational divides. These issues have not appeared overnight but are the result of decades of short-term decision making by those in power.

Despite clear warnings, increasing public pressure and the ability to implement solutions – our leaders are failing to act.

Why?

Because again and again, short-term political gain, and corporate greed, is being prioritised over long-term wellbeing.

The recent extension of Woodside's North West Shelf is a stark example. Australia exports 80% of the gas we produce, and Western Australia exports even more at 90%, so any argument that we could face a shortfall without the expansion of this project is disingenuous at best.

While some politicians fall over themselves to tell us how important fossil fuels are to our future – the science is clear. There can be no new or expanded fossil fuel projects if we want to leave a liveable planet for our children and grandchildren. And whilst there is undoubtedly a role for gas as our energy system decarbonises, this decision is more about kowtowing to corporate interests that are looking to build a new market for gas in South East Asia.

This decision to extend Woodside's operations on the North West Shelf by 40 gob smacking years, was made during a year of record-breaking floods and droughts in Australia, as well as marine heatwaves and mass coral bleaching events. It was made without requiring the environment minister to consider the emissions produced from burning the gas extracted.

This project has been described as a 'carbon bomb.'

This is not just a failure of climate policy – it's a failure of governance and moral responsibility.

Following Minister Watt's decision, the message I am hearing from everyday Australian parents and grandparents – is one of despair. A sense of loss for their children and grandchildren.

The overriding question has been – ‘What can be done?’

Yes, we must strengthen our environmental laws, but we need to go further so our policymakers are forced to move beyond a narrow, short-term decision-making vortex. We need to completely overhaul the way our policymakers and public bodies make decisions.

Earlier this year, I introduced a private members bill into the Federal Parliament called the [*Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill, 2025*](#).

And before you roll your eyes – this has already been successfully implemented in other countries.

Inspired by an Act that was passed in the Welsh Parliament in 2015, my bill protects the principle that in meeting the needs of the present generation, we must not compromise the wellbeing or capacity of future generations.

There are three core elements to the bill; the development of a shared vision for our country; the embedding of a framework for holistic decision making that moves away from siloed, sector specific thinking; and the appointment of a Commissioner for the Wellbeing of Future Generations to oversee this transition.

During my first term of parliament, I was staggered by how often I witnessed Ministers and departments working at odds with each other. The most concerning example I saw was the Resources Minister often working in direct opposition to the Environment Minister. This culture must change, and developing a shared vision for our nation is just the start.

Wales offers a powerful example. In 2015, thousands of people, both young and old, joined the ‘Wales We Want National Conversation’ program to determine a shared future vision for their country. But many countries, including Australia, do not have that shared vision for our nation.

Other jurisdictions are following the example set by Wales. The European Union, for example, is developing strategies to promote intergenerational fairness, recognizing the need to ensure that today’s policies do not disproportionately burden future generations.

We are facing a decisive decade. Whether we like it or not, the decisions we make now on the climate, on the environment, on housing, on tax reform and on our economy will determine the world our children and grandchildren inherit.

If we continue to prioritise short-term political wins and fossil fuel profits, our future generations will be in crisis. But if we adopt a long-term, holistic approach to policymaking that considers both short and long-term impacts, we can begin to reverse some of the challenges we face.

Can policymakers, after the North West Shelf gas decision, really look at our children in the eye and say, ‘we are doing our best for you’?.

We owe it to our kids to do much better.

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