



Picture: Glenn Campbell

Territorians paying gas giants to take resources

Justine Davis



Last weekend, the Territory's Minister for Mining and Energy, Gerard Maley, claimed that our energy debate is being driven by "ideology instead of reality".

The irony of this is too rich to ignore. Because what the Minister offered Territorians was ideology in its purest form: unverifiable claims, industry talking points dressed up as strategy, and a studied refusal to engage with the numbers. If there is anyone in this debate mistaking faith for fact, it is the Minister himself.

The reality the Minister studiously avoids is this: Territorians are paying the gas industry hundreds of millions of dollars a year and getting nothing in return.

The great lie peddled by the gas lobby, and parroted by successive NT governments, is that we must frack the Territory to keep our economy afloat. But after subsidies are paid and contracts to buy our own gas back are signed, the gas industry provides no benefit to the Territory.

Let's look at the facts. New independent research from the Australia Institute shows the CLP government will give \$355m in subsidies to multinational gas companies this year alone, while receiving just \$346m in total from both gas and mining companies combined – and a lot of that comes

from mining. That means Territorians will effectively pay – at minimum – \$9m for gas companies to dig up, sell and burn resources that belong to us, for free.

On top of that, according to the Australia Institute, the NT government has promised an estimated \$4bn over the next few years to buy back gas from these companies once it has been fracked.

When you look at the company reports of gas giants operating in the NT, the reality of how little the industry contributes grows starker. Santos and INPEX paid absolutely zero dollars in gas royalties, or Petroleum Resource Rent Tax (PRRT) to the NT or Federal governments for gas they took for free from NT Commonwealth waters, despite making \$20.4bn income just in 2022-23.

The Minister touts the gas industry's billions in Gross State Product, but GSP means little to everyday Territorians — it counts money even when it's funnelled straight to offshore gas companies. That money will never reach you; it may as well be flying overhead in a golden aeroplane. The Minister wants you to believe fracking gas in the Beetaloo Basin is different – that

because it is onshore and taxed by the NT Government, it will 'attract billions', 'create local jobs', and 'support regional communities'.

But again, he can't tell you how, and – you guessed it – that's because it's not true.

According to ACIL Allen's independent modelling, in the best possible scenario, fracking the Beetaloo Basin would only generate \$69m a year in revenue – less than 1 per cent of the NT budget – and that's before subsidies paid, or purchasing contracts signed.

It's simple. Not only does the gas industry generate no income for the Territory, we pay them to take away and sell resources that belong to us. How does that benefit Territorians?

Certainly not through jobs. Gas jobs make up less than 1 per cent of the NT workforce and many of these jobs are FIFO. The mid-range estimate for the Beetaloo Basin is just 90 ongoing jobs. When you divide that by what we will pay the gas industry in subsidies this year alone, each job at Beetaloo would cost taxpayers over \$350,000 per year.

And what about gas being 'critical' to national security? The reality is, the world is transitioning away from gas, and it will only become more

expensive – with or without global conflict.

What truly strengthens national security is independent, domestic production of energy, and in the NT, that means solar and wind.

Digging up and burning gas is driving our climate crisis. The myth that gas is a climate-friendly 'transition fuel' has been thoroughly debunked – burning gas is far worse for the planet than burning coal.

The NT is more vulnerable to climate change than the rest of Australia.

Instead of giving \$355m every year and \$4bn over the next few years to the gas industry, we could transform the Territory's energy sector, creating secure, independent and climate safe power. We could fully resource emergency services and disaster mitigation, rather than relying on last minute injections of \$100m when cyclones or floods strike.

Subsidising the gas industry drains funding from disaster readiness while worsening the climate crisis that fuels those disasters. So, why does Gerard Maley keep defending it?

According to the NTEC, successive NT Governments have received thousands of dollars in donations from the gas industry.

In the last 10 years, at least three NT ministers for mining and energy have taken jobs with the gas industry after parliament.

So, next time the Minister for Mining and Energy tries to tell you that the gas industry will save us all, ask him to explain how.

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Albo's half-a-million bird plan

Bart Irwin



I welcomed the news last week of the Albanese government investing more than \$500,000 to support the Northern Territory prepare native species for a potential H5 avian influenza (bird flu) outbreak.

The funding will help enhance and improve the condition of critical habitat for species that are most at risk from H5 bird flu, including the Territory's iconic magpie goose.

In Mary River National Park the funding will support aerial surveys of at risk species and increase the efforts of Parks and Wildlife rangers in the removal of invasive pests such as feral pigs, buffalo and gamba grass.

Additionally, Gurrulwiling Rangers will tackle weeds of national significance, including olive hymenachne and mimosa, to improve the wetland habitats of the Gurrulwiling.

The fight against these weeds has been on my radar since 2006 and I have been at the forefront of volunteer efforts since then.

Healthy habitats and strong populations give native species the best chance of withstanding the potential impacts of H5 bird flu.

Not only this, but these projects will have long-lasting, broad conservation benefits.

This funding is part of the Albanese government's broader \$100m investment to prepare for H5 bird flu.

This includes \$35.9m for environment measures, with the following investments already underway in the NT.

The Minister for the Environment and Water Murray Watt said that work to support habitats was an important part of preparing for H5 bird flu.

Northern Territory Minister Joshua Burgoyne said early detection was critical to minimising the impacts of H5 bird flu.

I would suggest to minister Burgoyne NT waterfowl hunters could provide bio samples from geese and ducks hunted this coming season.

“**The NT is more vulnerable to climate change than the rest of Australia. If we want to live here long term, we cannot afford to keep subsidising gas.**”