

ITEM 9

NOTICE OF MOTION - COUNCILLOR MITHRA COX - REDUCING GREENHOUSE EMISSIONS FROM GAS

Councillor Mithra Cox has submitted the following Notice of Motion –

“I formally move that -

As part of the next Climate Mitigation Plan, Council investigates ways to reduce greenhouse emissions from gas, both within Council operations and in the broader community. This could include but not be limited to -

- a Banning or discouraging gas connections in all new dwellings and greenfields developments.
- b Replacing gas hot water heaters at Council pools and community facilities with electric, solar, or heat pump systems.
- c Replacing gas cooking facilities in Council owned buildings with electrical appliances.”

Background provided by Councillor Mithra Cox:

- Wollongong Council in 2019 made a Climate Emergency Declaration calling for urgent action to reverse global warming.
- Wollongong Council has developed a Climate Action Strategy acknowledging that urgent climate action is critical and planning to take practical steps to address climate pollution at a municipal level.
- Gas is a fossil fuel and must be phased out if the world is to achieve its target of net zero emissions.
- It is now widely accepted that the cheapest and easiest pathway to decarbonisation is through electrifying everything: because electricity from renewable sources is cheap and easily accessible.
- Methane (the key component of LNG) is up to 83 times more polluting in a 20 year period than carbon dioxide and fugitive emissions are routinely underreported (IEA 2022).
- The International Energy Agency has advised that no new gas fields can be developed if the world is to safely and sustainably achieve net zero emissions by 2050 (IEA 2021).
- Gas burned in the home releases a cocktail of airborne pollutants including nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, formaldehyde and particulate matter with a range of health consequences, particularly for the young, old and frail. Similar in impact to living with a cigarette smoker in the home, having gas appliances in a household increases the chances of childhood asthma by at least 12%. The risks to human health of gas appliances in buildings is particularly felt by lower income residents who are more likely to live in smaller, more populated households and lack the resources to adequately maintain their appliances to reduce these risks (Climate Council 2020).
- Gas is increasingly uneconomical with the market price in NSW (AER 2022) roughly doubling in the 12 months from December 2020. As more people turn away from gas and towards renewable energy and increased energy efficiency measures the price of gas will rise as the remaining gas users carry the burden of pipeline infrastructure which the Australian Energy Regulator has identified as stranded assets. Households with an existing connection wishing to disconnect from gas face a disconnection charge.
- Gas is an increasingly insecure energy source. NSW draws much of its gas, through the Jemena pipeline from the Gippsland offshore fields in Victoria, which are depleting rapidly. Other sources of gas supply may be provided by future gas wells in Narrabri or from fracking fields in Queensland and/or the Northern Territory. The hunt for more gas to supply the domestic and import markets creates market volatility and carries environmental risk which can be avoided through renewable electrification.
- Gas connection refusals are increasing across the state, nationally and internationally. In 2019 the City of Berkeley in California was the first US local government to refuse new gas connections, by unanimous approval, across their municipal areas. In 2021 the ACT Government announced a ban

on new gas connections in developing suburbs and the City of Canterbury Bankstown have already proposed a denial of gas connections in key growth areas. A rapidly growing number of councils are replacing gas in council buildings in favour of renewably powered electric appliances to manage municipal carbon emissions and costs.

- The best way to safeguard future residents of the Wollongong City Council's economic and health interests, and to reduce climate impacts, is to not connect households and other buildings to gas in the first place.