

Coal-seam gas is the way forward

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COMMENT

THE immense natural gas reserves throughout NSW offer an overdue solution to the state's energy supply problems.

In 2030 NSW will need about 60 per cent more electricity than it does today.

But as things stand, about 90 per cent of NSW's electricity is sourced from coal and generators are using about 40 per cent more coal than they were in 1995. As a result, NSW is second only to brown-coal-powered Victoria in terms of carbon intensity and has the highest rate of sulfur-dioxide emissions of any Australian jurisdiction.

People want cleaner, affordable and reliable energy - yet we shy away from nuclear energy and new hydroelectricity dams. And given that wind and solar cannot yet provide the continuous or affordable power we need, NSW has to find a new way to keep the lights on, while reducing emissions.

Gas-fired power stations emit up to 70 per cent less greenhouse gas emissions than existing coal-burning plants. Yet in NSW, gas only delivers about 3 per cent of electricity - and NSW only produces 4 per cent of the gas it consumes. This is despite the fact the CSIRO says the coal seams of NSW and Queensland hold enough gas to power a city the size of Sydney for more than a millennium - 1111 years, to be specific.

Environmentalists, who on one hand demand climate action yet oppose the most plausible climate-friendly energy source, deride coal-seam gas (CSG) extraction as "new" and "untested".

CSG might be new to NSW, but it's not new. Gas has been used in Australia for more than a century and CSG has helped power Queensland for almost 20 years. In fact, about 90 per cent of Queensland's gas is now CSG and Queensland will soon export its CSG around the world.

CSG's days of being a new technology are far in the past.

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