

Gas bans make net zero sense

Paul Nicolaou



Here's a contradiction to contemplate: The NSW government is quite rightly allowing more gas exploration to ease the energy crisis.

Yet even as the government hunts for more gas numerous local councils are banning it.

Premier Chris Minns and Natural Resources Minister Courtney Houssos taking the shackles off gas exploration is a positive step.

There is something else they must do. They must intervene to stop councils unilaterally imposing gas bans.

Ten councils in NSW, many of them in Sydney, have already imposed bans and four others are considering them. It's a recipe for confusion, complexity and cost.

The bans unfairly deny homeowners and businesses a

fundamental choice of using a useful, reliable and acceptable energy source.

But the bans are also a serious concern for the hospitality sector.

Chefs commonly use gas in meal preparation and are very unhappy they could be denied access to it.

We are at risk of "post code" regulation where neighbouring areas have a different regulatory framework – a recipe for chaos.

Councils are figuratively treading on the government's regulatory toes by exploiting planning provisions positioning their gas bans as an environmental measure.

The government's approach reflects current energy challenges. It is the first move in 10 years to open up new gas exploration areas. It is a timely intervention to

safeguard energy capacity.

Ms Houssos says about 40 per cent of NSW's gas goes to industry to achieve high temperatures to manufacture products such as glass, bricks, chemicals and processed foods.

Increased gas exploration would need significant private investment, but who would invest when one tier of government is banning the fuel?

The government should tell councils to butt out with their gas bans. Such a confused situation is bad for consumers and for businesses. It's ultimately very bad for the economy.

It must stop.

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