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Time to lift natural gas exploration bans

After six months, the Victorian parliamentary inquiry into onshore gas has produced four reports with conflicting conclusions.

"The compelling fact is that the inquiry has not presented any scientific evidence to support continuing bans on gas exploration and development," said APPEA Chief Executive Dr Malcolm Roberts.

"Indeed the Committee admits that it 'was unable to reach definitive conclusions about whether or not an industry could or should proceed at this time' (page 129).

"This finding is in stark contrast to the findings of numerous independent and expert reviews, here and overseas.

"The Australian College of Learned Academies, the Royal Society, the Council of Canadian Academies, the NSW Chief Scientist, the Hawke Inquiry in the NT and the WA Parliamentary Inquiry have all reached the same conclusion – unconventional gas can be safely developed with appropriate regulation.

"The Victorian Government now has the opportunity to consider whether it should continue with unjustified moratoriums or take sensible steps to allow the safe development of the State's resources.

"An obvious start would be to lift the inexplicable ban on *conventional* gas exploration and development – for more than 50 years, businesses have been exploring and developing conventional gas resources onshore in Victoria.

"There is much at stake for Victoria. The state relies heavily on natural gas.

"Almost 80% of its households use gas. A large part of Victorian manufacturing needs gas for energy and as an irreplaceable feedstock for its products. Almost 40% of the gas used by Victorian industry is used as a feedstock to create products such as fertilisers, textiles, paints and pharmaceuticals.

"With many conventional gas reserves depleting, Australia will need to rely on unconventional gas sources to provide energy to homes and industry.

The Committee has overlooked the potential for economic growth in regional communities and in local manufacturing."

APPEA notes that the Victorian Government now intends to develop a gas policy over the next six months and looks forward to working constructively with the Government.

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