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oil and gas industry

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Lazarus inquiry – time running out

Time is running out for the Senate Select Committee into unconventional gas mining (sic) to show that it can contribute to a genuine, fact-based public debate.

“The first public hearing degenerated into a show trial,” said APPEA Chief Executive Officer Dr Malcolm Roberts.

“The hearings in Narrabri today will hopefully be more balanced, in particular we trust there will be no more personal attacks on local employees. It is concerning that the inquiry has still to hear from independent scientists or the industry.

“No industry representatives were invited to appear at today’s hearings. It seems that the same can be said for scientific experts.

“Activists and local groups opposed to developments are entitled to be heard. But the committee should hear all points of view and seek the best possible, independent expert advice. Otherwise, the inquiry will simply be a waste of time and taxpayer’s money.

“The facts matter. The committee has the opportunity – and the responsibility - to improve the public debate, not amplify slogans and unsubstantiated claims.”

“The gas industry is participating in good faith despite the obvious hostility of the chairman of the inquiry, Senator Lazarus. Senator Lazarus repeatedly makes the offensive claim that the gas industry is committing ‘genocide’ and is happy to be photographed donating to activist groups.

Dr Roberts said natural gas is an essential commodity for Australia, needed for low emission power generation and as an irreplaceable feedstock for manufactured products such as fertilisers, plastics and chemicals.

“There is a compelling body of evidence from leading institutions and experts showing that, properly regulated, unconventional gas developments do not threaten the environment or public health,” he said.

“It is more than time for the inquiry to start considering that evidence”.

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