



Thursday, 20 November 2014

## **PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE TABLES ‘GAS FOR THE BUSH’ REPORT**

***“It’s time has come” say committee members***

The NSW Parliament’s State and Regional Development Committee has today tabled its report into downstream gas supply and availability.

Chair of the Committee, Member for Orange Andrew Gee, said the centrepiece of the report was a recommendation that NSW adopt a policy termed “Gas for the Bush”.

If adopted, the policy would see the NSW Government pay “bounties” to private companies to get regional communities connected to reticulated gas – as has occurred in Victoria, where the Committee visited during the inquiry.

“This report is primarily about equity between the cities and the country,” Mr Gee said.

“Connection to gas is a service that those in cities have enjoyed for years but for many in regional NSW, gas for homes and businesses is only available by way of tanks and cylinders which can in some cases make its use prohibitively expensive.

“Access to gas not only gives consumers more choice about where their energy can be sourced – it can also be a key driver of economic development in the regions. That’s what we’re interested in – growing strong country communities,” he said.

The inquiry’s deputy chair, Northern Tablelands MP Adam Marshall, said there were demonstrated economic gains for those communities connected to reticulated gas.

“We took evidence from Victoria where energy costs for regional businesses and homes were reduced by up to 30 per cent a year,” he said. This provided an enormous incentive for expansion projects and for large energy consuming businesses to relocate their operations to a regional community.

“We feel Gas for the Bush should be a signature NSW Government regional economic development initiative, which will spread the obvious benefits across country NSW and strengthen its hand to attract investment, people and to thrive.”

Mr Gee said that the question of where future gas supplies for NSW are to be sourced was well outside the scope of the inquiry, with the focus of the Committee’s work being downstream gas supply (that is, the delivery of gas to end-users).

“The sourcing of gas is an upstream supply issue that other inquiries and other reports have examined (and indeed continue to address). Having said that, I think that the recently signed memorandum of understanding between the New South Wales and Northern Territory Governments for a gas pipeline linking Central Australia to the East Coast shows there’s strong support for building pipeline infrastructure, which augurs well for our “Gas for the Bush” policy. We think it’s time has come,” he said.

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