Natural gas has power to turbocharge economy ANDREW MCCONVILLE

* 9:35PM APRIL 18, 2021

Imagine a world with no warmth for clean cooking and heating, no sustainable fuel for power stations to provide electricity and drive our machinery as our energy mix changes, no glass, no clothing, no mobile phones, no steel, no concrete, no computers, no paints or plastics and much more.

This would be a world without the oil and gas industry — it is a simple fact vested interests choose to ignore time and time again.

But facts never get in the way of a good story for some people.

For example, you can provide facts such as natural gas is abundant and versatile and is the cleanest-burning hydrocarbon, able to partner with renewable energy sources, but critics won’t listen. They don’t want to listen.

If Australia seizes the moment and embraces natural gas, we can both lower emissions and help turbocharge our economy.

Right now, the industry has invested more than $450bn over the past decade and supports 80,000 jobs directly and indirectly.

But this will need to ramp up significantly to support Australia and indeed the world reach our climate goals.

The International Energy Agency says natural gas demand in Southeast Asia will double by 2040 in a scenario consistent with achieving global net zero emissions by 2050.

We in Australia must be prepared to capture this enormous opportunity — for jobs, for our economy and for countries that want energy security and better environmental outcomes.

Australia’s natural gas could continue, as it has over the last decade, help China become cleaner and greener and therefore help the world reduce emissions.

Australia is already the largest source of China’s LNG imports and so Australian gas is right now playing a key role in the world’s most populous country as it looks to reduce its emissions and lower air pollution in its largest cities.

In fact, the Australian government estimates that our exports of liquefied natural gas help reduce emissions in importing countries by about 170 million tonnes each year — the equivalent of almost one-third of Australia’s total annual emissions.

Natural gas-fired power plants are more reliable and longer lasting than battery storage and produce much lower levels of noxious substances such as sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and fine particle emissions compared to coal.

This could be a game changer for Australia and our economy.

We need to back initiatives that will allow the oil and gas industry to unlock new investment.

Investment drives job creation and skill development opportunities, promotes domestic spending, provides energy security for homes and businesses, and ensures long-term and sustained contributions to government revenues.

A recent EY report showed with the right policy settings, the oil and gas industry has the potential to increase economic value to the Australian economy by $350bn and create 220,000 new jobs over the next 20 years.

National Energy Resources Australia estimates each oil and gas worker sustained 10 jobs across the supply chain.

If we get this right, then the prize for Australia is immense. We need to be bold in Australia and we must commit to getting the policy settings right for long-term investment.

There is further opportunity for investment on the horizon. Australia has significant resource basins waiting to be developed, and these can be developed provided that Australia’s investment environment is stable, attractive and globally competitive.

We have an opportunity here to turbocharge our industry and through it, the Australian economy.

*Andrew McConville’s context*

*Andrew McConville is CEO of The Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association. This association represents companies which explore and produce oil and gas in Australia. Mr McConville is a corporate affairs professional with over 25 years’ experience working in advocacy and policy for large agriculture, banking and industry companies and has also been a policy advisor to the Victorian Government.*

**Winton’s context.**

*Tim Winton grew up in circumstances that will be instantly recognised by many baby boomers. His childhood home lay on the ragged edge of Perth’s rapidly expanding suburbia. It was the 1960s, and he had the freedom to roam the swamp at the end of his street, hiding in hollow logs, knocking birds out of trees with slingshots and encountering venomous snakes, until “darkness fell and mothers began to bellow from every back step on the street”. Measured against the straitened and regimented childhoods endured by many today, it was a carefree idyll that both offered a true education about what it was to be a Western Australian and laid the foundations of his brilliant literary career.*

*He watched the encroaching suburbs eat the bush. Soon, the wilderness was all gone, and the gilded cage inhabited by today’s children was fully enclosed.*

*The lost freedoms and opportunities of childhood were only part of the cost of the breakneck pace of “development”. Winton describes how Perth’s suburbs have now surrounded and poisoned the Swan River with fertiliser run-off. Its upper reaches are kept alive with oxygen pumps, and the bream that once swarmed now bob belly up among the reeds. In its lower reaches, dolphins have died of mysterious lesions. Perth’s citizens watch as the city suffocates the river that gave it life.*

*The Australian culture that could so comprehensively destroy something so precious is a subject of enduring fascination to Winton. He concludes with astonishment that the perpetrators, with rare exceptions, simply did not see it. To them, the bush was a uniformity of subdued green, of no value, beauty or interest.*

*Environmental activism leaves Winton feeling divided. At university he followed reports of activists disrupting whaling activities off Albany. He saw the need to end whaling, but felt that some protesters were being profoundly disrespectful of the working men and women of the area. Winton is in fact in the vanguard of a new kind of environmentalism – one with its roots in working, regional Australia, and yet passionate about preserving nature. He is active in many environmental issues and is a great supporter of the Australian Wildlife Conservancy, which originated in Western Australia.*

**Perspective, viewpoint, context (values/beliefs)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Tim Winton** | **Andrew McConville** |
| **Viewpoint on oil/gas development in Australia** | **Oil and gas development is destructive to nature.** |  |
| **Contextual factors including values/beliefs** | **Childhood setting let him see the progression from rural to urban.** |  |
| **Examples of words or phrases each person uses to convey their perspective****(From ‘Saving Ningaloo Again’ or from ‘Natural gas has power to turbocharge economy’.** |  |  |