

Viva Gas Terminal Project Supplementary EES Inquiry

Presenting on behalf of CLIMARTE: Deborah Hart, 14 January 2025, 3.35pm, access [here](#)

Speaking Notes:

CLIMARTE's work harnesses the creative power of the arts to inform, engage and inspire action on the climate crisis.

Since establishing in 2010, we have brought together a broad alliance from across the arts, humanities and sciences to advocate for immediate, effective and creative policy action to restore a climate capable of sustaining all life.

Convinced that the climate crisis reflects a deep cultural crisis, our work places a cultural lens over the ways in which the fossil fuel industry and its backers have very effectively politicised climate science and solutions to maintain their entrenched highly profitable control over access to energy.

How much we know and how long we've known it:

Our understandings of the basic physics of climate change and its solutions date back to the early 1800s.

1824, Greenhouse Gas – the existence of what would later become known as the ['greenhouse effect'](#) was proposed by French mathematician and physicist Joseph Fourier.

1839, Solar Energy – at the age of 19, French physicist Alexander Edmond Becquerel observed and discovered the ["photovoltaic \(PV\) effect"](#) which was the foundation for generating electricity from solar cells.

1881, Electric Vehicles – what is likely the first [electric vehicle](#) was driven on Rue Valois in central Paris by French inventor Gustave Trouvé.

1887, Electricity from Wind – the first known [wind turbine](#) to generate electricity was built in Aberdeenshire village of Marykirk Scotland by James Blyth. Its four cloth sails generated enough power to light 10 bulbs along with a small lathe.

1940s, Renewable & Regenerative Fuel – [algae based alternatives](#) for fossil fuels and petroleum based packaging were in development. Algae also provides a highly nourishing food supplement for humans, animals and soils. It could also displace greenhouse intense chemical fertilisers because treating degraded soils with algae increases water, nutrient and carbon holding capacities.

Since the 1960s – the lethal consequences of burning fossil fuels have been well understood. People with the power, awareness and responsibility to avoid the Climate Emergency continue doubling down on disinformation campaigns to silence the science and suppress the solutions.

[Homicide cases](#) prosecuting fossil fuel companies and their allies are building.

As the Climate Council's rigorous research shows, [The Future of Gas is Small and Dwindling](#).

Most consumers want and deserve access to genuinely clean, safe and sustainable energy options.

Algae biofuel, as an excellent alternative:

Since development began in the 1940s, hundreds of strains of algae have been recognised as capable of:

- delivering fast growing, high lipid content, carbon neutral drop-in biofuels that could replace fossil fuels during the **transition to zero emissions**
- being produced in closed loop aquatic systems in ways that preserve land and can be grown in places where degraded soils are being regenerated, including former mine sites
- providing a highly nourishing food supplement for humans and animals and soils
- nourishing degraded soils while increasing their capacities to hold water and nutrients as well as to draw down and store more carbon
- providing natural alternatives to highly [greenhouse gas emitting fertilisers](#)
- being produced in community driven, small scale cooperative models that create jobs and build skills in local economies that need them most (as we know, 'industrial scale' is often a major part of the problem)
- being produced in models that would deliver back up fuels to help address local energy insecurity in vulnerable communities, as part of a mix of renewables and distributed storage
- being used in carbon-balanced models, that is equal parts as a fuel and a natural draw down technology (ie for every litre of fuel burnt, an equivalent amount is used to treat degraded land, fill up all the giant holes left from mining etc) so that there is a negative carbon equation.

Given the seemingly insurmountable dysfunctions of the current market economy, in the context of the Climate Emergency scale transition to zero emissions that is needed, it seems that our only possibility for developing naturally derived biofuels (such as from algae, oleaginous bacteria, yeast and/or fungi) is through local community owned, cooperative models as part of a renewable energy mix including solar, wind and batteries.

We argue this because over many, many years of inquiring about algae biofuels, we've always been told that it's not 'commercially viable'.

This is exactly what we were told about solar power, wind power and batteries, which are now well proven to be significantly cheaper than fossil fuels. It's 'not commercially viable' is what we're always told when vested interests are dead-set on maintaining 'business as usual' models that maximise their profits (gouge consumers, concentrate wealth and power) regardless of the consequences. It's precisely because nature-based solutions cannot easily be owned and controlled to extract private profits, that they pose an existential threat to the fossil fuel industry, as well as land grown and synthetic fuel producers.

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EMERGENCY:ACTION

Having used the same industry ([merchants of doubt](#)/'tobacco strategy') playbook since the 1960s, the many ways in which entrenched fossil fuel energy suppliers aggressively obstruct socially and ecologically sustainable alternatives are well understood.

Either way, it seems now like a lot more people are realising that an economy that cannot meet basic societal needs unless a relative handful of people can make massive private profits, and wield undue influence, is far beyond dysfunctional.

In response, determined communities are finding ways around self-serving industries and corrupt decision makers. For instance, after overcoming phenomenal obstacles, in 2007 [Hepburn Energy](#) was Australia's first community driven renewable energy cooperative. There are now [more than 100](#) located all over the country.

The [Geelong Sustainability](#) group is doing really admirable work demonstrating that a fair, zero emission future for the region is absolutely possible.

CLIMARTE stands in solidarity with the greater community [challenging Viva's appalling proposal](#). By every measure, we see it as a threat to vital local ecosystems and the global climate, an assault on local people, as well as a dangerous distraction at this critical time when the Climate Emergency is escalating in horrifying ways all around the world.

We urge the Advisory Committee to reject Viva's gas terminal project proposal.

Thank you for your time and consideration.