



Clean Energy News and Analysis

# "The gas led recovery is a fraud", Labor's Chris Bowen says

Michael Mazengarb (<https://reneweconomy.com.au/author/michael-mazengarb/>) 14 April 2021

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We need more of these: Minister for Industry Ed Husic, Climate Change minister Chris Bowen and prime minister Anthony Albanese with an electric vehicle before the last election. (AAP Image/Mick Tsikas)

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Federal Labor climate and energy spokesperson Chris Bowen says his party will underline the economic opportunities from an accelerated shift to clean energy, but has stopped short of committing to phase-out the use of fossil fuels ahead of its refreshed climate and energy policy pitch to voters.

In comments made during a webinar hosted by The Australia Institute on Wednesday, Bowen slammed the Morrison government's 'gas led recovery' proposal, labelling the plan as a "fraud".

"It's a slogan, it's not a policy. It's simply a fraud," Bowen said. "There's not been one job created, and there won't be a job created of this alleged gas fired recovery."

But, Bowen added that it was Labor's view that gas would continue to feature as a part of Australia's energy system for the foreseeable future.

"Gas will continue to play a role in firming and peaking our grid as we transition to renewable energy. We need to massively increase the storage in our grid through batteries, pumped hydro and hydrogen, which have various levels of development," Bowen told the webinar.

"But that's going to take time. And there's varying views are around about how long that will take or indeed what role gas will play as we do that, but that is the role of gas."

Bowen is seeking to distinguish Labor's positions on climate change from those of the Morrison government, saying that while Labor saw a continued role for gas, he would need to be "very convinced" on the need for government subsidies to pay for new gas infrastructure.

"Public subsidies are really where the market has failed," he said. "If the government really believed in investing in gas, they'd get out of the way, let the private sector get on with it. But you can imagine if you're on a board of an energy company, and every time you think about investing in gas, and the government says, we might invest in gas too, that's just a chilled to investment."

Bowen indicated that Labor would look to reframe its climate and energy policies to break down regular conservative criticisms that climate action is a trade-off against jobs and economic growth.

"I think you'll see a much stronger emphasis from the Labor Party on the economic opportunities of climate change. I refuse to accept this false trade-off that the conservatives peddle at every election that somehow ambitious action on climate change comes at a cost to the economy," Bowen said.

"We don't win that argument during an election campaign. We've got to win that argument now and every day between the election and including the election campaign."

Bowen said that Labor was currently working on a 'roadmap' of policies for reaching zero net emissions in 2050, that would be released ahead of the next election, but would not say whether Labor would announce interim reduction targets or an increase to the Morrison government's current 2030 target.

"I could announce wonderful targets for 2030. But unless we have outlined policies underneath it to get there, it's going to be pretty meaningless. So we need to be doing the roadmap, the strong roadmap, and I am committed to providing that to Australian people before the next election, as well as the policy levers which underpin that roadmap," Bowen said.

Asked about government policies on electric vehicles, Bowen said that he had some sympathy for State governments, including that of the Victorian Labor government, that are considering the introduction of new taxes on electric vehicles.

Bowen recently unveiled (<https://reneweconomy.com.au/bowen-pitches-labors-new-gas-friendly-climate-platform-and-an-end-to-toxic-politics/>) a federal Labor policy package to reduce the upfront cost of electric vehicles by providing exemptions from a range of federal taxes. But electric vehicle advocates have said such measures are being undermined by State government plans to introduce new road user charges targeted at electric vehicles and hybrids.

The Victorian state government is progressing plans to introduce a new per kilometre road use charge on electric vehicles in an effort to make up for lost government revenues from petrol fuel tariffs. The proposal has been slammed (<https://thedriven.io/2021/03/17/tax-on-clean-air-victoria-wants-ev-road-tax-in-place-by-july/>) as de-incentivising the purchase of electric vehicles at a critical moment in their early uptake. Bowen said that it would be preferable that the issue was resolved at a federal level.

"I understand why State Treasurers, and not just Victoria, are concerned. They're concerned about the eventual diminution of revenue to governments broadly, including the federal government, from petrol tax," Bowen said.

"That needs to be considered, and it would be better if that was considered, in my view, in a holistic national fashion."

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Michael Mazengarb (<https://reneweconomy.com.au/author/michael-mazengarb/>)

Michael Mazengarb is a Sydney-based reporter with RenewEconomy, writing on climate change, clean energy, electric vehicles and politics. Before joining

 (<https://twitter.com/MichaelMazengarb>) energy policy for more than a

decade.

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**Gus Griffin** • 2 years ago

You win elections with clearcut evocative platforms. This is not that. Labour has been sitting on fences for so long they have no balls left at all.

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**John John** Gus Griffin • 2 years ago

Labor's greenhouse gas manifesto was clear in the last election: they lost. Should they repeat the same mistake? Should they ignore their historical base of support? Unions, particularly in the resources sector?

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**Gus Griffin** → John John • 2 years ago

That's not how I remembered it, John, so I went back and had another look at the 2019 platforms. You are right, their position is clear enough, though they entirely failed to sell it. I guess I'm just fed up with their mediocrity.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**John John** → Gus Griffin • 2 years ago

Fair enough. I think you have to accept that most voters dont have the same clarity of vision that you may have and might have different priorities which are aped by the major political parties.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**jm** → John John • 2 years ago

They were also highly confused. Saying they supported reduced emissions and supporting new gasfields in the NT, which were opposed by the locals. They also refused to argue on the Adani issue, or the fake job estimates which the Coalition took as real. They wobbled, and looked inconsistent, but yes they were undermined by some unions. And then they blamed bob brown for them losing...

More importantly they did the franking imputation credit stuff, which nobody who does not use it would understand... and so they opened themselves up to accusations of stealing people's pensions.... Not a great idea. That is the kind of thing you argue for in government, not trying to win an election.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Ivan Quail** • 2 years ago

A gas led recovery can make sense. Here is how.

<https://au.citizensclimatel...>

and German Biogas production = 12,000 GWh per year

<https://bioenergyinternatio...>

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**solarguy** → Ivan Quail • 2 years ago

Yes biogas has a place and could be part of the recovery, but the fossil fools won't want that.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**JackD** • 2 years ago

With the passing of each day Chris (Bowen), that "Ambitious Action on Climate Change" needs to grow even larger.

The ALP after being spanked at the 2019 election, needs to formulate "killer" neutralising responses to the inevitable campaigns of questionable truth that will be waged by the Coalition, to undermine key ALP policy actions on Climate Change mitigation

key ALP policy actions on Climate Change mitigation.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Shane** → JackD • 2 years ago

I would have hoped that just restating the failure, lies and hypocrisy of the LNP was enough, but evidently Camus was right, and people prefer to bathe in the comfort of reassuring, flattering lies.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**John Boyd** → JackD • 2 years ago

Great idea! But the problem is finding one that actually cuts through.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Farmer Dave** • 2 years ago

If the ALP are still working out how they will reduce emissions, then I suggest they look at the detailed policy proposals developed by Climate Tasmania. They have suggested that the way to phase out fossil fuels is to attack the problem head on, by focusing on the largest users plus Government Departments and agencies, and requiring them to track and reduce their fossil fuel usage.

Under Climate Tasmania's proposals, the larger users of fuels (those whose usage exceeds a trigger level) will be required to report their use into a public database, and will be expected to steadily reduce their use over time, with their progress (or lack of it) available for all to see. The very largest users (another set of trigger levels) would be required to develop formal Energy Transition Plans, and to submit them for approval. Once approved, the Plans would be public and have the force of law.

An independent Energy Transition Authority would oversee all this; it would set the trigger levels - and reduce them over time - approve the Plans, etc. Most importantly, the Authority would be required to take equity into account in all its decision making, to do its best to ensure that no-one is left behind in the transition.

One of the strengths of Climate Tasmania's proposals is that it would attack the social acceptability of burning fossil fuels.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Barri Mundee** → Farmer Dave • 2 years ago

Yes I think the program outlined has a lot of merit. Use regulations to progressively mandate lower emissions, not tax imposts or emissions trading.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Hettie** • 2 years ago • edited

Readers here have a pretty good understanding of how much to trust Anxious Failure and anything he proposes. The "Gas led recovery" deserves no response other than scorn and derision.

What this country needs is a recovery led by green retrofitting of our disgracefully energy profligate buildings, domestic and commercial, with mandated upgrading of rental properties when sitting

tenants move out, including the provision of rooftop solar systems wherever there is an unshaded roof to put them on. Social housing, including but not limited to housing specifically for the homeless, is urgently needed.

For those who have been living in cars or sleeping under bridges, converted shipping containers would be luxurious. Well insulated, the 12m units can have proper kitchens and bathrooms, and the remaining area set up like a comfortable studio apartment, ideal for singles. Families could have homes made from 2 or more containers. They are quick and inexpensive to build, and if set around communal meeting and recreation facilities can help provide the sense of community and belonging that is the best protection against substance abuse.

Greatly improved building energy standards, supported by trained inspectors, employed by local government, not property developers, could be enforced whenever a property changes hands. The capital costs of retrofitting would soon be repaid by the lower energy costs for heating and cooling

see more

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**JackD** → Hettie • 2 years ago

I refer to said fellow as Fungus.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Barri Mundee** → Hettie • 2 years ago

Spot on!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**John John** → Hettie • 2 years ago

Yes indeed, it sounds like 1984. Since both Liberals and Labor are promoting gas and NSW, NT, QLD and WA are all committed to gas, your central plan seems somewhat detached. Lets have but higher energy efficiency standards but please leave the white shirt inspector brigade at home

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**ReverseConcaveSpoon** → Hettie • 2 years ago

You don't get into this amazingly bad situation without a dominant NewsCorp and it's agenda driven owners (who are pivoting to digital and ramming through rules that allow them to rent seek there too). The sheer fact that not many people are even aware of what is going on is the only reason it as gotten to this point and the only reason it could possibly continue or get worse.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Farmer Dave** → Hettie • 2 years ago

Great comment, Hettie - I agree completely.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Hettie** → Farmer Dave • 2 years ago



Thanks, Dave.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**smoodster** • 2 years ago • edited

Watching Four Corners on Monday night was like having a tooth pulled!

My anger at the endless lying by Scumo's cronies when they were being interviewed, and who have been appointed to the so called gas led Covid Recovery Council, and who all just seem to have connections into the Fossil Fuel industries, it really did make me want to throw a brick at the screen!

I held back, I didn't want wreck a good TV!

Bring on the election ASAP so as to stop this massive waste of tax payers money for a few corporate's who will be the only benefactor's.

Unfortunately, I have gas ducted heater, which I can't wait to get rid of.

My gas supplier was one of the companies that was interviewed on Four Corners. I received a letter from them earlier this year to inform me that my gas charges have increased for this year, as if they weren't high enough as they already are.

The excuse given was increased charges due to wholesale and distribution, a politely put way of just saying were going to gouge residential customers further because they are the weakest link, and to increase profits.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Hettie** → smoodster • 2 years ago

Hi, Smoodster. If you have a home solar system, do not delay but invest immediately in one or more good quality RCAC split systems. Set to the same temperatures, for the same times as your gas heater, RCAC will heat your home for around ¼ or less of the fuel cost. Perhaps as little as 1/6.

My small, energy efficient house was costing around \$500/year to heat. Armidale NSW has winters as cold as Canberra, and although many winter days are sunny, there are days when the maximum temp is just 6°C, and wind chill may make it feel like minus 3. Set to have the house a comfortable 21° by 07:00 hrs, then turn off at 09:30, when that big old heater in the sky takes over, then come on again at 15:00, off at 22:30, the gas heater was costing \$3/day. The aircon added only 50c/day to the power cost.

Obviously, every house and family will be different, but just go for it. My RCAC has paid for itself in 3 years.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›




**solarguy** → Hettie • 2 years ago

If he has solar, perhaps as little as nothing.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Chris Drongers** • 2 years ago

 I think Bowen's comments translate as 'Gas led recovery is a fraud, we prefer transitioning directly to renewable power and energy but we don't know how to say that without getting slaughtered (again) at the polls. In the meantime we will duck'n'weave so that we don't get too far away from the LNP'.

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

 **John John** → Chris Drongers • 2 years ago

His comment reflects that many Australians dont mind coal and gas power, and the balance of the electorate dont prioritise climate change over the economy and their paychecks, the unions want a gradual energy industry transition, and he needs their support to win.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

 **ReverseConcaveSpoon** → Chris Drongers • 2 years ago

Pretty much. "Gas lead recovery is ridiculous. Yes, gas will have some role for a while. Please don't hurt us Murdochs!"

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

 **Ben Rose** • 2 years ago

Gas gas fired recovery is a dangerous fraud with no jobs attached. Yet the WA State Government plans to do it

<https://reneweconomy.com.au...>

In contrast, see here jobs that would be created in a renewable energy led recovery for WA

<https://www.sen.asn.au/laun...>

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

 **howardpatr** • 2 years ago

Taylor is involved and we know how much credibility Stop These Things Angus Taylor has.

<https://stopthesethings.com/>

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

 **Ken Dyer** • 2 years ago

Of course it's a bloody fraud. You only have to look at the conga-line of ex fossil fuel of executives all lined up on Scummo's "Covid Recovery Council".

13 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

 **ReverseConcaveSpoon** → Ken Dyer • 2 years ago

They chose themselves?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

 **Rod** • 2 years ago

If they still support a build out of transmission to Renewable Energy Zones the market will sort itself out and fossils will be running for the door

A strange take on States and fuel excise though. It is 100% a Federal issue and the States need to

A strange take on states and fuel excise though it is 100% a federal issue and the states need to stay out of it.

4 ^ | v 1 • Reply • Share ›



**John John** → Rod • 2 years ago

They all want a t-line but no one wants to pay for it

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**ruckyboy** → Rod • 2 years ago

Both federal and state governments currently take a slice out of petrol pricing. Supposedly to fund federal and state road infrastructure. I'd agree that it would be neater if this was just a single 'tax' that was distributed fairly to the states

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Rod** → ruckyboy • 2 years ago

The States get funding from the Feds out of general revenue. The Feds collect the taxes



1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**ruckyboy** → Rod • 2 years ago

Thanks for spurring me into doing some (re)search.

I learnt that the states stopped collecting 'tax' at the pump over twenty years ago when Fed Gov introduced the excise tax. I've updated that in my memory now.

Also found that a portion of state road funding comes from vehicle licensing fees.

There you go.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Hettie** → ruckyboy • 2 years ago

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