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Media Release: Plibersek approves Gina Rhinehart Gas project clearing koala habitat. Call for Wills Labor MP Peter Khalil to oppose dirty gas

Late in the afternoon Of 25th June Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek's department approved the Stage 3 of Gina Rhinehart owned Senex's Atlas project under the EPBC Act(1) . This is despite the project's environmental impact statement shows it would clear 530 hectares of "koala dispersal habitat".(2)

An associated high pressure gas pipeline, which received federal environmental approval earlier this month, will also clear 35 hectares of koala habitat, 30 hectares of greater glider habitat, 28 hectares of glossy black cockatoo habitat, and nearly five hectares of Dulacca woodland snail habitat. (3)

The Project will construct 151 coal seam gas wells, as well as access roads, associated pipelines and a 300 million litre CSG brine storage facility.

Six and a half million litres of groundwater each day will be extracted to depressurise the coal seams. This will result in sinkage of surrounding agricultural farm land across Queensland's Western Downs (4)

Climate Action Merri-bek Convenor John Englart called for Wills Labor MP Peter Khalil to call for action against expansion of fossil gas, as the Federal MP for one of the most progressive electorates in Australia that overwhelmingly supports strong climate action.

"Peter Khalil should be raising with Minister Plibersek in the strongest terms possible that approval of new gas is against the climate science and the best advice of the International Energy Agency"

"The science is clear. New gas projects increase global warming and should not be approved. "

"Peter Khalil needs to come clean whether he supports climate justice and a halt to new coal and gas projects, or wants to see more catastrophic fires, floods and intense rainfall impacting Australians, indeed citizens around the world."

"Approving new gas wells, destroying Koala habitat and literally undermining agriculture farm production by groundwater extraction to depressurise coal seams should not be supported when we face growing global agricultural production food insecurity from heat stress and water stress driven by climate change from the production and use of coal and gas."

The latest research indicates that Global impacts of heat and water stress on food production and severe food insecurity will reduce Australian Food production by 5.8% (good case in which we rapidly reduce emissions) to 14.7% (bad case where we expand coal and gas)(5)

"While Minister Plibersek is happy to post photos of cuddling koalas, or more recently dogs, her actions in approving destruction of koala habitat for a new Gina Rinehart-backed coal seam gas

development show the terrible actions of this government in expanding greenhouse gas pollution driving the Climate Crisis."

"This Labor Government has failed to update national environment laws as promised. There is no Climate Trigger proposed for these laws, despite Anthony Albanese proposing such an action in 2005." (6)

"Labor was elected to take climate action in 2022 but instead has supported new coal and gas projects to make global warming worse against the well established climate science."(7)

Climate Action Merribek delivered 118 personal letters from Wills citizens to Peter Khalil In April and May calling for strong climate action, including calling a stop to all new coal, gas and oil projects, End subsidies to fossil fuel industries and place a levy on fossil fuel production and imports, and enhance the EPBC Act to include a climate trigger.(8)

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References:

- (1) See EPBC Act Public Portal Atlas Stage 3 Gas project <https://epbcpportal.ave.gov.au/all-notices/project-decision/?id=665dcb20-14f6-ed11-8849-002248156aec>
- (2) Senex Energy Environment Impact Assessment <https://senexenergy.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Atlas-Stage-3-Gas-Project-PD-DCCEEW-20240322.pdf>
- (3) See EPBC Act Portal Atlas to Reedy Creek Pipeline <https://epbcpportal.ave.gov.au/all-notices/project-decision/?id=8a800dd2-8b3c-ee11-bdf5-000d3a7943d3>
- (4) See Queensland Government Technical Report, December 2021, Underground Water Impact Report 2021 for the Surat Cumulative Management Area https://www.rdmw.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1584728/uwir-2021-report.pdf
- (5) See Peer reviewed Nature article: Kompas, T., Che, T.N. & Grafton, R.Q. Global impacts of heat and water stress on food production and severe food insecurity. Sci Rep 14, 14398 (22 June 2024). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-65274-z>
- (6) See Parliament of Australia, Private members Bill by Anthony Albanese, Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change (Climate Change Trigger) Bill 2005 https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_Legislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bld=r2416
- (7) The science on fossil fuel extraction and climate targets:
The International Energy Agency 2021 report, Net Zero by 2050 – A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector, <https://www.iea.org/reports/net-zero-by-2050>
Welsby, D., Price, J., Pye, S. et al. Unextractable fossil fuels in a 1.5 °C world. Nature 597, 230–234 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-021-03821-8>, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-021-03821-8>
Nogrady, Bianca, Nature, 8 September 2021, Most fossil-fuel reserves must remain untapped to hit 1.5 °C warming goal <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-02444-3>
Kelly Trout et al (17 May 2022), Existing fossil fuel extraction would warm the world beyond 1.5 °C , Environ. Res. Lett. 17 064010, <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/ac6228>
- (8) See Climate Action Merribek blog posts:
14 May, 2024, Glenroy residents: I want to see urgent climate action because... 44 letters to Labor MP Peter Khalil <https://climateactionmerribek.org/2024/05/14/glenroy-residents-i-want-to-see-urgent-climate-action-because-44-letters-to-labor-mp-peter-khalil/>
4 April, 2024, I want to see urgent climate action because... 74 letters to Labor MP Peter Khalil <https://climateactionmerribek.org/2024/04/04/i-want-to-see-urgent-climate-action-because-74-letters-to-labor-mp-peter-khalil/>