



PSA 

Eco Network

PSA Eco Network submission on the Crown Minerals Amendment Bill

October 2024

About the PSA Eco Network

The PSA Eco Network is part of the New Zealand Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi, the union representing over 96,000 public and community service workers.

The PSA Eco Network represents over 3,000 workers across public and community services who are motivated to act to improve workplace sustainability and campaign for action on climate change across the public sector.

Our members come from across the public sector – from the core public service to local government, the health sector, and publicly funded community services. In many cases our members are motivated by the same knowledge and expertise that also enables them to deliver quality advice and public services. Our members see the importance of public and community services in leading a just transition to a low-emission, sustainable Aotearoa.

General feedback on Government approach to climate reductions

The Eco Network supports the aims of the Carbon Neutral Government Programme, which results in both environmental improvements, and operational savings for the public service – vital in a time of cost-cutting resulting in mass job losses.

We support evidence-based actions towards meaningful emissions reduction. For example, there is a growing pool of evidence showing the emissions benefit¹ of flexible working arrangements that encourage staff to work from home² or travel off-peak³.

¹ [FlexiWork: Reducing consumer emissions with greater teleworking | Government Economics Network](#)

² [The carbon footprint of working from home | thinkstep-anz](#)

³ [The importance of "off-peak" | Greater Auckland](#)

Our feedback on the Bill

We strongly oppose this Bill, and in particular we strongly oppose the reversal of the 2018 oil and gas exploration ban. We call on the Economic Development, Science and Innovation Committee to recommend that this Bill does not proceed.

Oil and gas exploration

Reversing the ban disregards the scientific consensus on climate change, which unequivocally shows that continued fossil fuel exploration and extraction are incompatible with limiting global warming to 1.5°C – a goal that New Zealand has signed up to via the Paris Agreement because of the potentially catastrophic consequences of higher levels of warming.

The science is clear that we need to leave all remaining fossil fuel in the ground, so making a decision to allow and promote more fossil fuel extraction is incredibly irresponsible.

The Government has sought to justify reversing the ban based on current constraints on energy supply, and to “ensure that gas remains a transition fuel until viable and cost-effective alternatives are in place”. We strongly believe that this is the wrong approach. Supporting high-emission industries may yield short-term financial benefits, but it undermines the long-term resilience of New Zealand's economy. This Bill would lock kaimahi into industries with no long-term future, rather than investing into the skills and training needed for the renewable energy sector.

Petroleum and gas are not ‘transition fuels’ in the current context of rapidly increasing renewable energy development both in NZ and globally. Existing gas-users are already well into their decarbonisation efforts, and re-introducing petroleum lines would be costly, if not pointless as significant gas-users move away from its usage. Oil and gas trends are geo-politically sensitive and subject to supply chain disruptions, which has flow-on impacts to New Zealand economy. Additionally, the medium to long-term viability of new petroleum exploration and production is economically risky as the world moves towards cleaner energy. The Government's own advice has shown that reversing the ban would not contribute to any additional supply within the next ten years. This decision has been portrayed as being about providing a stable transition over the short-to-medium term, but in reality it is an attempt to extend our dependence on fossil fuels for another generation.

Fossil fuels should not be used for baseline electricity generation where clear energy and alternative models are already being used and would be costly to re-introduce fossil fuel into energy transition. The Government's priority should be on investing in a just transition to a low-carbon economy, through enabling renewable generation and energy storage at the home and community level. Homes with electric hot water, heating, cooking and cars are, on average, much cheaper than fossil fuelled equivalents, even with upfront costs and finance included. A more distributed energy grid would have the added advantage of making communities more resilient against increasingly strong and more frequent weather events. This is an approach that has the potential to be faster, more affordable, more equitable, and do less damage to our environment.

Other aspects of the Bill

There are several other aspects of the Bill that we have concerns about:

- We oppose changing the Act’s purpose statement to “promote” rather than “manage” prospecting, exploration and mining of Crown-owned minerals. This would shift the balance towards short-term financial gain, and away from responsible management of natural resources taking into account all relevant factors (such as environmental ones). This is especially true given that decisions under the Act (such as establishing Government Policy Statements) require alignment with the purpose of the Act.
- We oppose introducing provisions for establishing Government Policy Statements without also adding provisions for public consultation on them. This is contrary to good practice in developing policy and suggests an unwillingness to listen to the views of communities.
- We oppose implementing priority-in-time tendering process, and recommend keeping only ‘Block Offer’ tendering. If a new process is adopted, ensure iwi and hapū are consulted as they currently are under the block offer process.
- We oppose increasing the confidentiality period for prospective datasets.
- We oppose amending the rules around decommissioning requirements, which should instead increase the financial security requiring and ensure trailing liability.
- We believe the short public consultation period is manifestly unfair to the general public and limits meaningful and deeper engagement on the proposal.