

People make Australia great, not resources

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Australia offers the world outstanding higher education, intellect, innovation potential and access to world class scientific research and information systems.

We project ourselves as happy and caring people with a moral compass. With these assets, we could lead by example in an extremely challenged world - one desperately needing voices of reason and capacity for change.

Australians can now access quality climate information and regularly witness damage and suffering of people, wildlife, land and marine ecosystems. It is scarcely possible to claim that we don't know our futures are threatened by the status quo.

[State of the Environment Australia 2022 report](#), authored by top environmental scientists, warned us these ecosystems are in peril. It also tells us: "Our [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'] knowledge of country, developed through scientific practice, careful observation and interaction over millennia, has been portrayed as myth and legend. People were taken from country and treated as outsiders. There have been limited rights for heritage, water, land and seas - and we have often been powerless to protect our totems, plants and animals".

And guides us: "Future management of country must be premised on Indigenous-led approaches to strengthening and sharing our knowledge of caring for country. Sharing of knowledge must recognise our Indigenous cultural and intellectual property and respect the ancestors who gave us the knowledge".

Yet we have failed to acknowledge Indigenous knowledge. Just one example is the use of thousands of years old Aboriginal cultural burning practices which can prevent or reduce severity of subsequent bushfires; whereas the current practice of hazard reduction can increase their severity and frequency. The [2023 Voice referendum](#) invited us to stake out a mature and responsible identity, live the egalitarian values we claim to hold and create a future which actions this knowledge.

Sadly, most Australians chose to embrace voices of a few wedded to the dangerous status quo, failing to imagine something better.

One example is operationalising Morrison's "[gas-led recovery](#)" policies threatening our environment, climate, health and wellbeing. One battleground is the NT with a new Chief Minister, like her predecessor, adamantly supporting oil and gas industrialisation of lands and waters that Aboriginal territorians have cherished for six millenia.

Promised jobs and economic prosperity run counter to facts. For example, The Australia Institute reported the Japanese giant Inpex paid just \$120 million dollars on their \$41 billion income from Australian Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), no royalties or Petroleum Resource Rent Tax.

Aboriginal communities would be left bearing ill health, a damaged environment and loss of their cultural and spiritual homes. The contrast is a stark reminder of the handful of winners and scores of losers in the oil and gas game.

NT is following Queensland's lead in growing a gas/LNG industry on its prime agricultural lands. The former Premier's rapturous descriptions fail to mention that Queensland (20 per cent of the population) emits 30 per cent of Australia's greenhouse gases and its coal seam gas/LNG operations are the identified driver of Australia's 27 per cent increase in stationary emissions excluding electricity and 14 per cent increase in reported fugitive emissions, without even considering the massive LNG transport and combustion emissions overseas.

In his January 26 speeches, the Prime Minister repeatedly stated that it's the people of Australia that make it great.

We agree, its time for Australian governments to put people above profit gained from the devastation of our land, water and climate and stop stealing life from future generations.

We look, with hope, to new Queensland Premier, Stephen Miles, who pledged on day one to address these [unspoken climate atrocities](#). We hope all states and NT realise it's too late for their gas ambitions.

And we hope for an Australia that respectfully acts on knowledge of both Indigenous and Western science to ensure we are not the last generation. We are, after all, the ancestors of future generations - let's show them we cared.