Peter Styles  
Deputy Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Minister for Business

**Gunner out of depth on onshore gas policy**

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Deputy Chief Minister Peter Styles said criticisms from within the Federal Labor Party continue to reinforce that Territory Labor Leader Michael Gunner fails when it comes to key issues.

Mr Styles accused Michael Gunner of being out of his depth in regards to onshore gas and understanding the reckless destructiveness Labor threatens to inflict on Territorians.

Mr Styles said a speech being given by former trade union boss and Federal Labor Resources Minister Martin Ferguson at the Australian Domestic Gas Outlook 2016 conference in Sydney makes it clear that the Territory Opposition Leader’s onshore gas ban is ‘bad policy’.

“I’ve read Mr Ferguson’s speech and it warns that ‘if Labor wins the Territory election in August – and stick with this bad policy – it will inflict real economic harm for no environmental gain’,” Mr Styles said.

“Importantly he says Michael Gunner and Territory Labor’s moratorium policy is not based on evidence or science and in fact contradicts the findings of exhaustive, highly respected inquiries like the Hawke Report.

“The Hawke report found that environmental concerns surrounding the process of extracting shale gas can be effectively managed.

“Mr Ferguson suggests for Michael Gunner ignoring these reports may be politically expedient but it’s not good policy.

“The Country Liberals government has good policy already in place, we have already implemented Mr Hawke’s recommendations including ensuring the rights of land owners are protected, as well as culturally, environmentally and heritage sensitive areas are excluded from gas activity.

“We are continuing to develop our plan to implement world’s best practice for onshore gas regulations and we are currently inviting feedback from stakeholders and the community on the new draft environmental regulations for the Territory’s oil and gas industry.

The draft Petroleum (Environment) Regulations will implement recommendations by Dr Allan Hawke AC on how to introduce a best-practice regulatory system for the NT and;
• Ensure the environment is protected in accordance with the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

• Support oil and gas exploration and development to stimulate the economy and employment.

A Deloitte Access Economics study has found the onshore oil and gas industry has the potential to create 6,300 full time jobs in the Northern Territory and government revenue of up to $460 million a year.

The NT is said to hold one of the world’s largest supplies of onshore gas, enough to potentially meet Australia’s combined domestic and export needs for 200 years.

“Like the Giles Government, Mr Ferguson understands the importance of capitalising on the Territory’s gas potential,” Mr Styles said.

“He explains Territory Labor’s backflip from issuing exploration permits to more than 90% of the Territory while in government and now putting a ban on taking the gas out of the ground makes investment unviable and will leave the Northern Territory Government and Territory tax payers liable for compensation claims.

“Chief Minister Adam Giles has committed all royalties generated from the Territory’s onshore gas industry will be injected into education.

“The Opposition Leader’s reckless, ill-informed ‘no onshore gas’ policy will cost Territorians their jobs, cost our children their education and ruin an industry that has the potential to power the Territory economy into the future.”

Submissions for public comment on the draft Petroleum (environmental) regulations will be open until 4 April 2016.

Submissions can be made at www.onshoregas.nt.gov.au or by emailing onshoregas@nt.gov.au

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