

# Turnbull ignites gas in fight for future



Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull with CLP president Shane Stone during yesterday's party function

Picture: JUSTIN KENNEDY

## HAYLEY SORENSEN and MATT WILLIAMS

PRIME Minister Malcolm Turnbull has a simple message for the Gunner Labor Government regarding onshore gas development in the Territory: "Get on with it".

In an exclusive interview with the *Sunday Territorian* yesterday, Mr Turnbull said "Australia needs more gas, the Territory needs more gas and the NT needs more jobs". (Michael Gunner) dragging his feet over the development of big onshore gas resources is letting down the Territory and the nation," he said. Mr Turnbull said developing the Territory's onshore gas industry was crucial for Australia and the NT's future as it would

generate thousands of jobs.

"If you've got cheaper gas and affordable energy you will attract business," Mr Turnbull told the *Sunday Territorian*. "You've got so much going for you in the Northern Territory. You are right here on the doorstep of Asia, surely what you want to have is as much cheap energy as you can get."

"You've got a big opportunity here in the NT."

Mr Turnbull said concerns about fracking were largely unfounded. "It's being used right around the world. The concern about fracking is that you will impact on the water tables and water resources to the detriment of the environment or the cattle industry here in the NT so you have to make sure it doesn't do that," he said.

"The bottom line is as long as you've got the geological and engineering work done properly you can do it without impacting the water table being used by others."

The Prime Minister said there was huge unmet demand for gas in Australia.

"If you look at what's driven America's manufacturing resurgence it has been cheaper gas," Mr Turnbull said.

"The NT has a huge opportunity with developing the Beetaloo Basin and ... the time has come to get on with it. It's in the Territory's interest and it's in the national interest."

Mr Turnbull made a flying visit to Darwin to deliver a speech to party members at the CLP's annual conference yesterday.

In front of a friendly crowd, Mr Turnbull said: "We know that overseas investors and joint venture partners are keen to team up with local companies to explore and develop the Top End's mineral and gas resources."

"Businesses want to invest but to do so they need policies that enable exploration and development; favourable policies that will deliver investment, jobs and even more opportunities to the people of the North."

Mr Turnbull kept his focus on energy and away from other hot button issues in the NT including GST redistribution and federal investment in developing the north initiatives.

He touched briefly on the party's embarrassing

electoral wipe-out in the NT last year, and said he was confident the party would be "back bigger and better than ever" by the 2020 election.

A review cataloguing the CLP's own goals presented to its executive last week recommended the party "reinvent" itself while remaining independent of the Liberal and National parties to win back trust.

The NT Government imposed a moratorium on fracking for onshore gas after it won last year's election.

An interim report into an inquiry held into fracking in the NT was handed down in July. A final report is expected to be handed to the government later this year, which will help determine whether or not the moratorium will be lifted.

## While the NATS say coal is the solution

PAT GRIFFITHS

DEPUTY Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce has warned of an increase in blackouts unless politicians embrace coal power solutions.

Energy policy was front and centre at the Nationals federal conference in Canberra, which Mr Joyce addressed yesterday morning.

"Somewhere between floor 13 and 14 the lift will stop with you in it – an uncomfortable experience if you need to go to the bathroom," the Nationals leader said.

Ensuring baseload power supply meant seeking coal fired power solutions – including seeking to extend the life of the Liddell power station in NSW, Mr Joyce said.

He contrasted negotiations over Liddell to the closure of Victoria's Hazelwood power station early this year.

"We don't want the Victorian Labor experience becoming our national experience," Mr Joyce said.

At the conference, a motion to phase out subsidies for renewable energy was debated and carried.

Victorian Nationals MP Andrew Broad said one form of electricity generation should not be subsidised over another.

"But I do not want the signal sent out of this conference that we are against renewable energy," he said.

Former minister for developing the north Matthew Canavan said when it came to jobs, renewables were "just a short term sugar hit".

"We've taken all the subsidies away from our farming sector and now the biggest protection racket going around is in our renewable energy sector."

Mr Joyce said renewables were here to stay.

"We have our international obligations," he said.

"But we must not lose sight of where the main game is, and baseload coal fired power it is and will remain."

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