



Des Houghton

The insanity of destroying ecologically sensitive bush habitats to build wind turbines to save the environment was again laid bare this week.

We don't really need wind farms. We have huge volumes of gas under our feet to meet our energy needs for generations to come.

The value of our gas assets was reset this week at an astonishing \$489.7bn. The tally was based on volumes calculated by Geoscience Australia and current market prices. In the Surat Basin alone, gas is worth \$293.8bn.

The good news is the untapped gas in Queensland will deliver a \$45.6bn royalties bonanza for the state government in the next two decades.

So let us answer the call – drill, baby, drill! Our future prosperity demands it.

We need the royalties more than ever to repair the standard of living declines in the lost Labor years under the leadership of Steven Miles and Anastacia Palaszczuk.

And the groups with their hands out for never-ending welfare top-ups should welcome news of a gas royalties windfall.

Added to the royalties from our wonderful coal mines, there may just be enough revenue to repair our decrepit schools, improve hospitals and to continue the ambitious public housing rollout handled so admirably by Deputy Premier Jarrod Bleijie and Housing Minister Sam O'Connor.

Gas is not just about energy security. Underpaid police, nurses, teachers, firefighters and other public servants should also be jumping for joy at news of a substantial gas royalties dividend.

Or will public servants allow the ideological zealots in the ALP and the Greens to block gas exploration and rob them of potential pay rises?

Labor's attempts to strongarm Queensland into exclusively using renewables to power data centres is another attack on our economic sovereignty. No royalties are paid on renewables. We risk losing billions.

There is another compelling reason to develop our own gas fields, says David Spring, the chief of Eastern Gas, a gas exploration minnow now drilling a gas-bearing coal seam 9km west of Miles.

"The Australian Energy Market Operator says gas production from legacy fields in southern states is forecast to decline 46 per cent over the next five years. There will be more pressure on Queensland to pick up the slack," he told me.

WE ARE SITTING ON A FORTUNE

Untapped Queensland gas reserves could deliver over \$45bn in royalties. That money could transform our state if we drill, baby, drill

Eastern Gas is using bold new techniques to turn gas exploration in this state upside down.

The firm is initially drilling down 425m to a gas-bearing coal seam up to 6m thick. Instead of simply passing through the coal, the well will then turn and travel along it, Spring explains.

"Historically, most coal seam gas wells in Queensland's Surat and Bowen basins have been drilled straight down through the coal seams," he said. "Increasingly, gas companies are using more sophisticated drilling techniques that allow the well to turn underground and travel along the coal seam.

"Instead of a well passing through a relatively small section of gas-bearing coal, it can run along the seam for hundreds or even thousands of metres. This gives the well access to much more gas-bearing coal and can

help producers reach gas that was previously too difficult or expensive to extract.

"Arrow Energy, for example, has used angled and more complex wells in Queensland to increase the amount of gas-bearing coal reached by each well. This reflects a broader shift away from simply drilling more vertical wells towards designing wells to follow the geology underground."

The new buzzwords are directional drilling. Drilling horizontally along the seam can release additional gas, turning a marginal gas resource into a commercially viable one.

There are 10,000 gas wells in Queensland, most conventional vertical wells.

Spring knows his way around a gas field. He has had 40 years in petroleum as a geoscientist, exploration leader and senior executive across Australia, North

America, Europe, the Middle East, South America the Caribbean and North Africa. He began as a geophysicist with Esso Australia exploring the Cooper Basin.

He spent more than a decade with BHP Petroleum in Australia and overseas. Four years with Maersk Oil and management responsibility for the El Merk gas development in Algeria, and later led Mubadala Petroleum's global exploration portfolio in the UAE.

In 2015 Spring joined Senex Energy, partly owned by Gina Rinehart, to begin exploring opportunities in the Cooper and Surat basins.

The ACCC's latest "Gas inquiry interim report, June 2026" shows Queensland exports roughly 90 per cent of the gas produced in the state.

At home, gas is used to provide energy for fertiliser and explosives manufacturing and alumina and

minerals processing.

The gas industry certainly attracts some characters.

Eastern Gas raised \$5.5m and joined the ASX in February. Its biggest shareholder is Pure One Corporation, formerly Pure Hydrogen, which is chaired by former Northern Territory chief minister Adam Giles, one of Rinehart's lieutenants.

Spring engaged Viv Oldfield's company, Silver City Drilling, to do his drilling.

Oldfield, a cattleman, is Australia's biggest private landholder and owns several properties, with a total area of 78,000sq km, roughly the area of Scotland.

IRRITANT OF THE WEEK

The banana crisis. My beloved Cavendish is under global threat from Panama disease, TR4, according to QUT professor, James Dale. He fears they may become extinct.

So wattle you do when the time for courage arrives?

Physical courage remains one of the more admired human traits and, this Tuesday, we'll be introduced to a few more Australians who possess it.

It was only last year that the Governor-General's office departed from 50 years of tradition and, instead of releasing details of bravery awards in March and August, moved

Michael Madigan



them to September 1.

September 1 is not only the first day of Spring, but "Wattle Day" – our formal recognition of the nation's floral emblem which remains a symbol of

unity and survival through harsh conditions.

These bravery awards are still very much part of our honours system, inherited from Britain and modified for Australia 50 years ago.

But the new "Wattle Awards" have a distinctive Australian flavour.

The Golden Wattle is, along with the Crown, part of the Governor-General's insignia.

If we go back more than a century to World War I we will find "Wattle Day Leagues" across Australia selling wattle sprigs to raise funds for troops and their families back home.

There is no doubt the Wattle is a hardy plant, much in the manner that Australians like to see themselves a hardy people.

The Wattle is the first plant to germinate and burst into

colour after a big bushfire, often giving devastated communities a sign that renewal always occurs, and there is hope for the future.

For thousands of years the Wattle has also provided original inhabitants with medicine and food.

As Australia's Governor-General, Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn, AC, said last year, these awards

recognise courage, but also traits that can sometime accompany bravery such as "care, kindness, and respect."

On Tuesday, media outlets including this one will run details of those truly extraordinary Australians who overcame their own fears to help others and who, in doing so, richly deserve their recognition in the Australian Bravery Decorations.