

East Coast Plumbing and Gas Limited submission on the Climate Change Commission's 2021 draft advice for consultation

East Coast Plumbing and Gas Limited is grateful for the chance to comment on the Climate Change Commission's 2021 Draft Advice for Consultation. As a business that is on the ground in the gas industry, we strongly disagree with a number of the Commission's proposals around the future of our industry.

Please see our specific criticisms below.

1. The decision by the Climate Change Commission to ban all new gas systems in buildings after 2025 is not just damaging to our industry and business, but is also short sighted, unrealistic and does not recognise the many benefits of gas.

It makes practical sense for consumers to have a mix of energy sources available to them. If New Zealand relies almost solely on electricity for home heating, hot water and cooking, this could prove disastrous if the power grid was affected by extreme weather or a major earthquake.

Electricity is also not a viable alternative to gas heating in New Zealand's colder regions, such as Otago and Southland. In addition to this, a number of our customers operate businesses, such as food trucks and restaurants, rely almost solely on gas for cooking.

Current electrical supply is not carbon neutral and unlikely to be so for some time, in addition to this the electrical supply network is not currently capable of coping with the anticipated increase in demand if gas was to be removed.

2. The Commission's draft advice on gas has already had a financial impact on our business, with some customers believing this to be a final decision rather than a proposal. We have had several customers cancel jobs, including three hot water conversions to gas collectively worth more than \$12,000 to our business. A number of customers have called to cancel quotes for gas fitting work and are unsure what their solutions could be.

The report has caused significant anxiety and disruption. In a few brief words, it has given advice that, if accepted in its current state, would kill off our industry completely. The Commission needs to recognise that this affects real people with careers and hopes for the future. It also needs to acknowledge the important role that our industry will play in helping New Zealand decarbonise.

3. We strongly believe that the Commission's advice to phase out new gas connections after 2025 does not give our industry enough time to transition away from LPG and natural gas and towards options that emit less carbon such as hydrogen, rLPG and biofuels. Training our staff and ourselves in these alternative fuels will also take time—something the Commission has not considered.

We are extremely disappointed that there was no consultation with the industry before the draft advice was released, and that the Commission has not made any efforts to put right the damage it has already caused by the confusion around its messaging.

We hope that the Commission will listen to the gas industry's very real concerns and acknowledge that New Zealand would be far better to keep natural gas and LPG in the energy mix until we have viable low to zero carbon gas alternatives in place that can be used within our existing gas networks.

 of East Coast Plumbing and Gas Limited