

MEDIA RELEASE

LNG: Smart Energy Alliance calls on Government to put down the pen

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The Smart Energy Alliance is calling on Government to ‘put down the pen’ on LNG. The Alliance says time has run out and any attempt to sign a binding LNG contract during the election campaign would be a questionable way to commit New Zealand to a major piece of energy infrastructure.

“The General Election is now less than two months away. There is no immediate dry-year emergency requiring New Zealand to enter into a long-term LNG commitment before voters go to the polls,” Smart Energy Alliance spokesperson, Gareth Williams says.

Mr Williams says that the Government itself reported last week that significant April rainfall meant New Zealand came through this winter with high inflows and above-average hydro storage.

“So, what exactly is the emergency that requires a contract to be signed in the final weeks before an election? It gets more strange. The LNG facility requires enabling legislation covering the consents, approvals and mechanisms necessary for the facility, including authority to recover its costs. That legislation isn’t in place.

“The Government originally contemplated passing the legislation before the election. That hasn’t happened, yet it is apparently prepared to sign the contract anyway.

Mr Williams says signing a contract without enabling legislation is the wrong way around.

“Throughout the Government’s LNG process, the decision-making has been shrouded in secrecy. The analysis used to justify such a significant investment — including the assessment of its costs, alternatives and associated risks — has been withheld from the New Zealand public. We need more transparency on why the LNG terminal should go ahead and who it will benefit before a decision is made.”

“LNG does not have broad political endorsement. There is no immediate dry-year crisis. The necessary legislative framework isn’t in place. And New Zealanders are weeks away from deciding who governs them. There is no credible reason to force this decision through now. If LNG stacks up, it will still stack up after election day,” says Mr Williams.

The Smart Energy Alliance is calling on Government put down the pen to let New Zealanders vote first.

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