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Media Release

Matariki and a renewable gas future

Source: GasNZ

GasNZ teamed up with the BusinessNZ Energy Council today to commemorate Matariki with a vision for New Zealand's renewable energy future - and the critical role low-carbon, renewable gas can play in this.

Janet Carson, chief executive of GasNZ says Matariki is an opportunity for us "to stop, rest, eat, celebrate, and begin our new year. It's a time of reflection and transition."

"When I started in my role almost two years ago, I joined a technical organisation working closely with government and industry on technical standards to ensure a safe and efficient natural gas and LPG industry.

"Contextually we needed to wrap ourselves better around the issues of the day and the clear need for a decarbonised country.

"Celebrating Matariki is part of the new GasNZ. We will hold an annual event at this time that recognises where we currently are and contemplates the future, and we will host the people closest to us to join us in this occasion," she says.

The future the gas sector is embarking on is a marked departure from the past, Carson says.

It will be a transition to low-carbon, renewable gases and these will form a key part in New Zealand's decarbonisation journey. Processed into bio-methane, gas captured from waste water and landfills provide a solution to decarbonise gas and utilise organic waste at the same time.

In a panel discussion on the potential of renewable gas, attendees heard that there is plenty of energy in organic waste, allowing renewable gas to replace that sourced from fossil fuels.

New Zealand can produce up to 20pj of renewable gas from known feedstocks - that's five percent of total gas production and enough renewable gas to replace natural gas in all homes and non-industrial businesses in the country.

Panellist Cristiano Marantes, chief executive of national new energy centre, Ara Ake, said he was very optimistic about the role of biogas in a low-carbon energy future.

"While waste reduction should be a top priority, the waste that is left can be used in the form of biogas to reduce emissions, produce useful energy - both for heat and electricity - and other valuable products from waste such as bio-char and bio-CO₂.

Fellow panellist Heather Leggett, chief marketing officer from Australian engineering and equipment supplier, Eneraque Renewables, agreed that bioenergy is a critical part of our energy future, but that public awareness of the potential of biogas is low.

“The good news is both our countries are investing in lifting awareness of renewable gases and surprisingly our approach is very similar, she said.

“I saw the Firstgas ‘treasure’ billboard outside Wellington airport promoting the use of waste for biogas.

“Likewise Australian Gas Infrastructure Group and energy provider Jemena have invested in broadscale print, digital and outdoor campaigns aimed at raising community awareness about the vital role of renewable gas in our energy future.”

She said the Malabar Biomethane Injection Plant - a partnership between the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), Sydney Water and Jemena - is using wastewater to produce biomethane “and last month successfully injected the renewable gas directly into the New South Wales gas distribution network”.

Chief executive of Firstgas, panelist Paul Goodeve, said that working jointly with Ecogas, Firstgas had invested in New Zealand’s first large-scale biogas to pipeline project to turn biogas from Ecogas’s Repora anaerobic digestion facility into pipeline ready biomethane, the low carbon equivalent of natural gas.

He said Firstgas was investing because it had confidence in the real potential biogas offers.

This confidence was backed up by the international experience, where renewable gas has been identified as a key pillar of decarbonisation in Europe.

As an example, there are more than 203 organic waste biogas facilities in Germany and Denmark that produce energy, and those countries are currently using biomethane to supply 20 percent of their natural gas grid, with a goal to increase to 100 percent by 2050.

“The demand for biogas is growing. There has been over \$6.1 billion dollars of investment into biomethane globally in recent months, demonstrating the strong future this technology has in reducing carbon emissions.

“We’re really excited to help Ecogas get biomethane into our Reporoa pipeline and to see what this could mean for Aotearoa.”

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About GasNZ

GasNZ represents renewable gas, natural gas and LPG companies. Its vision is that renewable gases, including biogases and hydrogen gas, are a material part of the energy mix in Aotearoa. GasNZ is committed to a net-zero carbon future.

Its members cover all gas energy fuels and all parts of the gas chain: gas producers; gas distributors; gas wholesalers and retailers; and gas equipment suppliers.