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Oil & gas can help net zero

The West Australian (Saturday edition), Perth

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The way we have managed COVID-19 should teach us a critical lesson about how best to tackle climate change — together.

The pandemic has thrown up constant challenges and changes on all fronts. It has changed the way we live, forced us to innovate, and taught us the value of co-operation.

But as we plan for what life might be like when we are ready to live with the virus, we now need to focus on the other critical challenges facing our communities, nationally and globally.

One of those challenges is climate change, with the United Nations COP26 meeting increasing focus on emissions reduction across the economy.

In the energy sector, our commitment and efforts to decarbonise our energy supplies as we aim for net zero emissions by 2050 have intensified.

It now seems that every man and his dog has a plan or project to reduce or abate greenhouse gas emissions. This is to be embraced. We need a melting pot of ideas to shake out new innovations and solutions to protect our environment and ultimately the future of us all.

It's a bit like developing a safe vaccine to protect people around the world from COVID-19 — not all efforts will prove successful but allowing a variety of ideas and initiatives to prosper is more likely to bear fruit, and to do so quickly.

What is less constructive, however, is the emergence of

some to actively denigrate the decarbonisation efforts and proposals of others.

This will only harm our quickest route to net zero, especially if it leads to the exclusion of other ideas, stifles innovation and overlooks expertise.

It also puts at risk an economic and environmental opportunity for our State.

Western Australia's oil and gas industry is set to be a global leader in emissions reduction technologies like carbon capture and storage and hydrogen.

These technologies will be critical not just for the energy sector but will ultimately be used by many other sectors of the economy in the quest for net zero.

Carbon capture and storage is one component of the decarbonisation tool kit. The technology is proven, with 27 CCS projects in operation around the world capturing and storing millions of tonnes of CO₂ every year, including the world's biggest, right here in WA, Chevron's Gorgon project.

Despite the challenges that can come with developing a large scale and innovative project, Gorgon has already safely stored five million tonnes of CO₂, the equivalent of taking more than 1.6 million passenger vehicles off Australia's roads for an entire year.

And the Australian industry is just getting started. Wesfarmers, Mitsui & Co. Ltd, and Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National are all considering the CCS opportunities in WA; the Northern Territory Government, oil and gas industry and CSIRO are working together to consider a

CCS hub near Darwin; and in South Australia, Santos continues to progress its CCS project at Moomba that will initially store 1.7 million tonnes per year and could ultimately store up to 20 million tonnes of CO₂ each year.

Across the world, there are over 100 CCS projects in construction and development.

These job-creating projects are crucial to meeting our

emissions reduction targets, a view backed by both the CSIRO and International Energy Agency. The IEA Net Zero 2050 report said: "If progress in these technologies were delayed and could not be deployed at scale, then achieving net zero emissions by 2050 would be vastly more difficult."

Not only is the industry leading the way on CCS technology, but natural gas is also a pathway to clean hydrogen solutions — one of the fuels of our future.

Western Australia's oil and gas industry can leverage our infrastructure and expertise as one of the world's largest LNG exporters to produce and export low-emissions hydrogen.

Woodside has unveiled plans to make WA a global hydrogen powerhouse by establishing a world-scale facility in Kwinana, with the support of the State Government. Called H2Perth, the project would be one of the biggest facilities of its kind in

the world, could produce up to 1500 tonnes a day of hydrogen for export, and is designed to be net-zero emissions. Australia's oil and gas industry is part of the climate solution and is advancing the technologies needed to reduce emissions economy-wide.

Decarbonisation of our



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energy mix is important to us all, and we need all the tools in our toolbox to achieve net zero by 2050.

Just like developing the COVID-19 vaccine, this is a race against time. Different industries will see different decarbonisation opportunities and we need to keep all options on the table.

Let's not throw stones and waste time, let's all be part of the solution.

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Decarbonisation of our energy mix is important to us all.



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