



# Gecko - Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council

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The Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Email address: rrat.sen.aph.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: Submission on Inquiry into Australia's future oil supply and alternative transport fuels**

**Introduction:** We thank the committee for the opportunity to comment upon this very important issue and hope that we will have further input, as your findings become known. Gecko - Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council is the peak environmental organization on the Gold Coast. Our submission suggests the increased use of environmentally sustainable energy solutions and decreased reliance on diminishing supplies of fossil fuels. Peak oil and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are both key factors in our consideration. We commend the Inquiry into these issues and will address each term of reference in turn.

The comments below demonstrate that the 'solutions' to Australia's future energy supply are well researched and well known. What is lacking is a true vision and commitment to the future of this country and not just surviving the current political term of office. Where are Australia's states men and women who plan and implement strategies for the long term?

The peak oil and global warming crises are upon us and still our leaders prevaricate and hope the major problems of these issues will not engulf them while they are in office. No one in Australia's political landscape appears to have grasped or are willing to admit that the economic costs of global warming are monumental compared to the costs of prevention.

As conservationists who have worked for thousands of hours over many years to raise these issues in the public and political consciousness we hope that this enquiry will finally provide the essential opportunity for action and not more talk.

**a. Projections of oil production and demand in Australia and globally and the implications for availability and pricing of transport fuels in Australia.**

There is enough evidence to suggest that we have reached peak oil globally and it's now in decline. Australia produces light crude oil and imports the majority of our supplies of oil. Exploration studies to date show that Australia has very little future resources and that those which can be found will be expensive to produce, coupled with consumption that will double over the next twenty years. Most of the world's oil is produced in politically unstable countries with future predictions of higher prices for crude oil as global supplies dwindle.

**b. Potential of new resources of oil and alternative transport fuels to meet a significant share of Australia's fuel demands, taking into account technological developments and environmental and economic costs.**

Given that the three levels of Australian government embrace growth economics and that the majority of development is along the narrow coastal strip around Australia, radical policies will have to be developed by our Governments to provide transport fuels to meet our needs.

The three levels of Government must act in concert to devise policies that will not only mitigate Australia's dependence on oil, but fund major research to encourage scientists and inventors in producing transport fuels that either do not cause emissions or reduce emissions to sustainable levels.

Case studies have shown that alternative fuel or car designs have been "bought up" by the oil companies who wish to continue our dependence on oil for their profit margins. There are also many scientists and inventors struggling to produce their inventions on very little capital and need funding to produce products that will decrease reliance on oil. Many Australian inventions become overseas property because of a lack of Government vision and funding.

Many Australians feel that Government in Australia is "captured" by the oil industries and that there is no political will to find solutions to this urgent problem.

Scientists and inventors must be encouraged and properly funded to bring about technology such as magnetic, anti-gravity or other technologies that may be based on science fiction but with proper resources could become science fact, including royalties and patents for technology that is proven and can reduce or eliminate emissions.

A department, commission or committee could be set up with the necessary technological expertise to supervise the source of funding and investment in technological advances and short-list prospective candidates with sound and practical theories that can morph into development of prototypes with ownership by the Australian Government and royalties to the successful scientist/investor.

A financial benefit to the Australian Government would be by selling patents to other countries while retaining intellectual property rights of the patent.

Scholarships and specially funded university courses to encourage gifted students to work full-time on these prototype projects with a view to lessen environmental impacts and economic costs.

Any oil or gas currently used for in-situ power should be replaced with alternatives currently available such as solar, wind, wave, biomass, etc., reserving those transport fuels for emergency supply until an alternative transport fuel system is developed.

Biofuels must be analyzed for whole of life energy input for amount of energy provided, to determine whether or not they are of net benefit.

**c. Flow-on economic and social impacts in Australia from continuing rises in price of transport fuel and potential reductions in oil supply**

Australia largely depends on its road system for transporting goods around Australia. As stated previously, the government's growth economics policy and the Australian public's preference for cars increase our dependence on oil. With dwindling supplies and the size of our road network, it is essential to look to other means to reduce our dependency on oil through better planning, infrastructure and technology as these factors greatly influence our oil usage. Higher prices will lead to a demand for higher wages, increasing the pressure on inflation. If Governments do nothing or they participate in a "wait and see policy," we will end up like Germany in the 1930's, with roaring inflation and foreign debt as a result of peak oil, higher greenhouse emissions as the population increases and global warming devastating agriculture and our living standards.

**d. Options for reducing Australia's transport fuel demands:**

The emergency of World Wars I and II brought about huge strides in technology that provided industrial and domestic advances in peacetime through government and industrial collaborative approaches to science and technology.

Planning, infrastructure and transport needs require an innovative approach that will change Australia's mobility and lifestyle requirements.

Trains need to be technologically advanced, made accessible, fast and affordable to carry passengers and freight in greater numbers than now exists. Uniform gauge on tracks needs to be addressed and the design of a better regional system, especially in the larger regional centres.

The dependence on our road systems needs to be examined. The demand for more roads and their maintenance is an impost that does not solve our dependence on oil, but increases our use, therefore must be considered as a lower priority in planning for an energy-efficient Australia. As road services decrease, drivers could be re-trained as engine drivers and in support services.

A bus service connecting to trains, providing affordable, accessible and convenient routes in regional areas needs to be addressed in order to assist Australians to overcome their dependency on cars.

Better planning to allow Australians to live in “village-inspired” centres rather than urban sprawl, where residences, workspaces, shopping and recreation are within cycling, walking or public transport reach. The public needs better and safer walkways and bike paths, more public open space for recreation resulting in lower health problems and a reduction to Governments in health funding.

Research, planning and development of regional areas should be funded to provide for frail, aged or transport disadvantaged people.

Dimitri Baches, a visiting Architect from the USA came up with a 12 point plan in combining living areas, with transport, shopping, work spaces and recreation that he recreated in a town in Florida, USA.

Agriculture needs to undergo a radical reform by returning to methods such as permaculture and the like, in order to become more productive, to improve the soil, to become less energy dependent and to cope with climate change and our dwindling water resources. Farms should be integrated into town plans on the outskirts of each “village node,” to better access transport and marketing links.

When the new technology is available based on zero or little output of emissions, this technology can be subsidized while Governments can introduce higher taxation of fossil fuels and energy-demanding technology.

**Conclusion:**

The time has come for Governments throughout Australia to forward-plan for the inevitable outcome of peak oil and climate change. Transport is only one aspect of the change to Australian society that must take place if we are to survive into the next century. The Australian public looks for leadership and action from our Governments and in return will give their support to whatever Government takes the initiative in meeting the challenge that faces us. Australia has what it takes to be innovative and forward thinking. We hope that this Inquiry is the first step in that process.

Yours faithfully

Sheila Davis  
Gecko Campaign Coordinator