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17 February 2006

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

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

Dear Sir

Terms of Reference

Referred 29 November 2005 for inquiry and report by 15 June 2006

Australia's future oil supply and alternative transport fuels, with particular reference to:

- a. projections of oil production and demand in Australia and globally and the implications for availability and pricing of transport fuels in Australia;
 - b. potential of new sources 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;
 - c. flow-on economic and social impacts in Australia from continuing rises in the price of transport fuel and potential reductions in oil supply; and
 - d. options for reducing Australia's transport fuel demands.
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- a. Australia and in particular Western Australia is highly dependant on oil for transport. Australia's population is growing at more than 100,000 per annum and private transport by motorcar is the preferred method of most Australian residents. Apart from the environmental considerations, I am concerned that the socially disadvantaged will be particularly hard hit by the expected price projections.
 - b. While new sources of oil will assist in reducing the immediate financial impact of reducing particularly the socially disadvantaged living in peripheral city suburbs with poor public transport services, the environmental impacts of carbon dioxide production must be of over riding concern to all. The introduction of fuel miser cars such as the hybrids will not help fast enough but may be a small part of the solution to reducing demand. Increasing utilization of gas (LPG) will also make only a partial solution. In the long term we may regret the export of large quantities of LPG overseas as this is a serious contender as an alternative energy source for transport. The use of public transport networks can reduce oil dependency for example by rail electrification. This needs to be in tandem with the construction of renewable energy

production sources such as wind farms and with a serious improvement in public fixed transport infrastructure. The continuing use of coal is irresponsible in terms of the well known serious environmental impact involved. I have no confidence that CO2 sequestration is a viable technological answer. Similarly the net carbon cost of nuclear fuel has been questioned. For fixed transport, wind, tidal, wave, photovoltaic energy production will be appropriate depending on the geographical location.

- c. The average per annum distance traveled by Indians is 650cm versus Australians 14,000km. The social consequences of attempting to reduce the average Australian's distance traveled will be large. Major changes in social attitudes toward transport are required for serious reduction in transport energy use. These could include but should not be limited to requiring work places to provide convenient bicycle security, shower facilities and appropriate locker space at the place of work.
- d. Attempts to reduce the average individual demand for transport energy will be in vain if Australia's net population increase of more than 100,000 annually (due entirely to Federal Government immigration) are not drastically reduced. The total Australian demand for transport energy rises as a function of the size of population increase of Australia. The energy consumption of many immigrants to Australia rises enormously as these immigrants adopt the Australian lifestyle. There is no correlation between measures of national economic performance and population size. I am sure the committee will be able to easily obtain appropriate figures supporting this assertion.

The single most important point in this submission is the recognition that Australia can no longer afford to think of itself as a frontier country with unlimited resources for unlimited population growth unless it is prepared to accept a considerable future reduction in the average standard of living as measured in particular in environmental terms of cheap clean drinking water, clean air, temperate climactic conditions, pleasant living locations with room for outdoor living and plenty of cheap transport energy for those trips to the holiday beach or bush location. I have no confidence in technology being able to provide solutions at reasonable cost to the average Australian that will allow this standard to be maintained. Reducing population size will assist in reducing urban sprawl, reducing the need for new infrastructure at the urban sprawl periphery, reducing the need for longer transport distances and times in city congestion.

I trust the committees findings will reflect the maturity required of a nation which has completed its adolescent growth phase and is prepared to take a leadership role as a nation capable of reducing its dependence on oil energy for transport as a whole while positively contributing to the reduction in greenhouse gases production.

Yours faithfully

Robin Collin

