

The future of Australia's oil supply is dependant on a number of factors.

The one factor which will have a long term negative impact on our future ability to maintain a supply of 'affordable oil' is the concept of peak oil.

As a member of the public I was initially a sceptic about the issue of peak oil and its ramifications on society .

However I decided to do my own research and looked at both sides of the peak oil argument, by sifting through the available information in order to reach my own conclusion on the subject.

At the end of this process I became convinced that we are heading to a point where we are indeed going to reach the phenomenon of peak oil and unless we start taking action now, then we are in for a tremendous economic and social shock.

Petroleum and its byproducts are utilised in almost every aspect of our society and our daily lives from the home, to transport , agriculture, medicine, manufacturing, the list can go on and on.

Our economy and our continued expectations for future prosperity and economic stability are built on the premise of an accessible, relatively inexpensive form of energy which many believe will always be available.

However it is clear that this is a false premise for the following reasons:-

- The world is already using more oil than is being discovered.
- No significant oil discoveries have been made in recent years on par with previous large discoveries as in the Middle East or the North Sea, this is despite continued advancements in technology.
- Many oil fields that have reached peak are depleting at a faster rate than previously predicted, this in fact will hasten the advent of peak oil.
- The reserves of oil, that cartels such as OPEC state they have, are now considered of dubious accuracy since we cannot independently determine how much oil is held and of this how much can be extracted at a reasonable cost.
- We know that as many third world countries increase the size of their middle class, demand for oil and its by products will increase, yet supplies will tighten.
- To date there are no serious alternatives to petroleum, there is no 'magic bullet' which can replace it as a widespread, cheap and efficient source of energy.

We can ameliorate the effects of peak oil somewhat. We can start by decreasing our dependency on motor vehicle transport, invest in more efficient modes of public and commercial transport, however in my home state of Victoria the state government seems to have not the slightest clue about this issue and merrily continues to build and propose to build additional road networks in and around Melbourne as if the future supply of oil is well assured and there is an inexhaustible supply. Knowing what we

know now, about future demand and supply of petroleum, the continued large allocation of resources to road funding is highly irresponsible.

Surely, given the risks faced, our governments both state and federal should be endeavouring as a minimum, to promote energy conservation and energy efficiency in all its forms, provide incentives for and encourage bulk transport by rail rather than long haul road freight and ensure funds are being allocated to a first world standard public transport system rather than funding more roads for more cars and trucks and digging ourselves into a deeper hole in the process.

The time then to act is now and not when the crisis comes upon us.

Yours sincerely

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