

Peter Nattrass
14 Moore Street
Prospect SA 5082

24 February 2006

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

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

As an Urban and Regional Planner I have worked in Australia and the United Kingdom in the areas of Development Assessment and Planning Policy. Through this experience I have become aware of the concept of Peak Oil and the threats and opportunities that energy decline will pose to Australian towns and cities and the lifestyle that we hold so dear.

I therefore make this submission in the expectation that Australia's policy response will focus upon embracing the post carbon economy to optimise the benefits and opportunities for energy equity for all Australian's.

Be it today or in 20 years time, the event of Peak Oil represents a genuine threat to the ability of urban and rural towns and cities to adequately and equitably cater for the complex needs of residents. The timing of Peak Oil is irrelevant and the message to governments should be clear;

"If the ship's going down don't be the last one to go looking for a life jacket!"

With the fortunes of the global economy inextricably linked to the availability of 'cheap' and readily accessible energy, there comes an increasing need for decision makers to proceed with caution rather than blindly following the bullish view that mankind and technology will prevail.

No-one debates the fact that energy is essential for the continued functioning of the industrialised and urbanised system that we have created. In fact, the question we should be asking is;

'What incentives do the concurrent threats of Peak Oil, resource depletion, Global Warming and Global Environmental Degradation provide decision makers to get the decision on future energy policy right?'

Due to the fact that the concurrent timing of these issues will cause significant trauma and upheaval to our society, we must act decisively and without compromise. Our response should include the following;

- Through The Planning Institute Australia, educate and empower Town Planners and the development industry to promote and encourage alternative transport solutions. This would include design initiatives which discourage car ownership, reduce overall domestic greenhouse emissions and accelerate the up take of alternatives,
- Not delay in making hard decisions,
- Not opt for a stop gap solution,
- Act early rather than later to develop a strategic plan for transition to alternative fuels,
- Initiate structural changes in our cities and society to avert transport disadvantage. Measure should include;
 - Equalisation of government investment into public transport, walking and roads.
 - Increase population density around public transport nodes and shopping centres.
 - Stop urban fringe expansion to protect agriculture and promote a more compact urban form,
 - Promote and encourage Development Plans which include mixed used centres in suburban areas, reintroduce local employment and create walkable suburbs.
 - Increase food production within and in closer proximity to the city that the food will ultimately be consumed.
- Promote energy equity to avoid a new class system of energy rich and energy poor,
- Promote and encourage the cleanest and greenest forms of energy to protect air quality, the environment and reduce health system expenditure (Healthy people are happy people. Happy healthy people are productive)
- Select an alternative primary energy source that will still be abundant in 1000 to 10 000 years time.

Political inaction and an over reliance upon the free market to act in the interests of the majority will be unforgivable. The very fact that we are asking this question is clear evidence that the free market has failed. Do not allow financial muscle to smother policy directions or initiative which would maximise choice and diminish future opportunities for our children's children.

Clean coal and fossil fuels may well have a future in John Howard's vision of a cleaner greener world, but we just can't wait for a CSIRO scientist to pull that rabbit out of a hat. Governments must act now to support an energy future which draws upon a broad base of alternative generation coupled with effective demand management.

Simply put, if the leaders of today can't say sorry for decisions made in the historical context of 200 years ago, what hope should we hold that someone in 50 years will be prepared to say 'sorry' for the radioactive waste and carbon emission that were created whilst we bridged the gap to

energy freedom. Anyway, who's going to pay the 'U-Store It' bill on the nuclear waste for the next 250,000+ years?

As a society, we must embrace this opportunity to select energy sources and portable fuels which are most compatible with a no impact future. Fostering new industries and new innovation will foster new hope.

Protecting the companies who created/contributed to this problem will not create the alternative future that mainstream Australians truly desire. If you choose poorly, we will most certainly be left with a planet that is the equivalent of a penny dreadful on the New York Stock Exchange.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. To discuss my submission further, please contact me on 08 8269 6667 or email nattrass@e-access.com.au

Yours sincerely,

Peter D. Nattrass
B. PI (Hons) MPIA