



Australian Election: Peak Oil Policy Responses

Posted by [Phil Hart](#) on November 24, 2007 - 3:00pm in [The Oil Drum: Australia/New Zealand](#)

Topic: [Policy/Politics](#)

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Reposted to main today after the Australian election result, which looks like a relatively sizable defeat of Howard's centre-right coalition.

This is the third article in relation to the Australian Federal Election, coming up next Saturday 24th November, 2007. The previous two articles are:

[Garry Glazebrook and Peter Newman - A Public Transport And Green City Manifesto For The Federal Election](#)

[Matt Mushalik - Election Time in the Land of Oz](#)

In September, I sent a [policy survey](#) to the four main parties (Coalition, Labour, Greens, Democrats) seeking their official view on peak oil and details of relevant policies. I received the first response from the [Greens](#) and second from the [Coalition](#) (Liberal/National Parties), but no response from Labor (which is especially disappointing) nor the Democrats.

The complete survey responses are here:

[Coalition Policy Response](#)

[Greens Policy Response](#) and [Transport Policy Addendum \(Roads to Rails\)](#)



Here are some highlights:

(a) Does your party recognise peak oil with specific policy on this issue?

Coalition: The Coalition takes a holistic view of Australia's energy needs, recognising that effective policy is needed to manage all risks and make the best use of all our energy resources.

Other initiatives include taxation incentives to stimulate greater exploration, significantly increased funding to Geoscience Australia to support oil and gas exploration and long-term support for biofuels.

(and from covering letter) The Senate Inquiry was presented with widely differing evidence on the extent of the world's oil reserves. I note, for example, that ASPO's estimates of the ultimately recoverable resource are less than half of the estimates supported by the US Geological Survey.

Greens: Yes. In fact it was due to our concern about Peak Oil that the Australian Greens initiated the Senate Inquiry into Australia's future oil supply and alternative transport fuels.

(b) How will your policies reduce the vulnerability of Australian communities to the effects of high petrol prices?

Coalition: The Coalition appreciates that fuel is an important part of every family budget. International Energy Agency December 2006 statistics show Australia has the fourth lowest retail petrol prices and fifth lowest retail detail prices among 29 OECD countries.

While no Australian government can control the international factors which set the global oil prices, the Coalition is giving practical help to motorists.

Australia has one of the lowest levels of fuel taxation in the world. The Coalition abolished indexation of fuel excise which means that excise is 17.2 cents per litre lower than it would otherwise have been.

The Coalition has also strongly supported biofuels, such as ethanol. The Coalition has provided almost \$100 million in Ethanol Production Grants and more than \$30 million in Biofuels Capital Grants to kickstart the industry.

Greens: The Australian Greens have a range of policies that seek to reduce Australia's reliance on oil, including through improving public transport, supporting the development of second generation biofuels and electrification of the vehicle fleet and shifting freight from roads to rail. Key features include introducing mandatory vehicle efficiency standards, tying car industry support to improved efficiency, more stringent Government procurement policies and removing the favourable tariff treatment for four wheel drives. More detail can be found in Senator Christine Milne's report [Re-Energising Australia](#).

(c) What level of federal funding will you provide for urban and regional public transport?

Coalition: The provision of urban and regional public transport is a responsibility of State and local governments. The Australian government's priority is supporting the national AusLink network, in particular the infrastructure essential for the nation's freight task.

Greens: *From the public transport policy provided subsequent to initial survey response:*

Australia, and much of the world, is on the brink of an economic, social and environmental crunch thanks to our love affair with private transport. With climate change, oil depletion and traffic congestion all coming together, it is clear that we need to change the direction we are heading with transport.

Dealing with these three interlinked problems requires three equally important solutions: improving vehicle fuel efficiency, replacing fossil fuels with low emission substitutes, and shifting people from private cars to safe, fast, reliable and cost effective mass transit, and freight from trucks to rail.

Roads to Rails deals with the third of these, the fundamental shift we must make out of private

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transport: funding first-rate public and freight transport options, including fast, efficient rail links, busways and cycleways. The policy complements previously announced polices looking at improving private transport: our Cleaner Cars policy and an alternative fuels target.



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