



The Bullroarer - Wednesday 20 February 2008

Posted by [Big Gav](#) on February 20, 2008 - 6:25am in [The Oil Drum: Australia/New Zealand](#)

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Adelaide Advertiser - [Australia 'on verge of being a solar nation'](#).

AUSTRALIA has the know-how and the industrial capability to become a solar nation, but needs government and individuals to take action, the country's largest producer of solar energy products says. BP Solar regional director Brooke Miller said Australia could install three gigawatts of peak energy, enough to provide solar power to more than one million homes and thousands of businesses. That would make the country a benchmark solar nation and a world leader in alternative energy.

She also told the third international Solar Cities Congress in Adelaide the drive towards a sustainable energy future would also produce more than 9000 new jobs and save four million tonnes of greenhouse gases each year. "We have an enthusiastic and engaged market," Ms Miller said. "Australian families and householders are embracing the technology like never before and the Australian business community is awakening to opportunities to turn their roofs into power plants."

Ms Miller said what was needed now was action from governments around Australia to adopt feed-in legislation, to make switching to solar power more economical for individuals and companies. Last week the South Australian Government introduced into state parliament the first feed-in laws in Australia, which will allow consumers to sell back electricity they produce in their homes or businesses to the grid at a profit.

SMH - [Tcard debacle: state pursues fares lost to broken ticketing machines](#)

SMH - [That plasma telly is about to get an energy rating](#)

ALL home appliances will soon have to conform to a strict new 10-star energy efficiency rating system, the federal Minister for the Environment, Peter Garrett, said yesterday.

Power-hungry plasma televisions and computers will have to carry new labels so customers can compare efficiency claims, and national three-yearly reviews of household energy use will be undertaken. The changes are likely to revamp a whitegoods industry in which highly efficient products often do not make it to Australia because of a lack of awareness. Many fridges, dishwashers and airconditioners on sale overseas would already carry the equivalent of nine- or 10-star ratings under the present system.

"It will give manufacturers an incentive to continually improve their products and give

consumers accurate information when making purchasing decisions," Mr Garrett said at the International Solar Cities Congress in Adelaide.

SMH - [Garrett vents his inner gimp in Pulp Fiction redux](#)

"MY QUESTION is to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts," began Greg Hunt, the Opposition front bench's pocket rocket yesterday. What he should have said was "Bring out the gimp!"

Because what followed - the question time debut of Peter Garrett - was a masterpiece of snarling savagery that would not have looked in any way out of place in Pulp Fiction. We've been waiting for Mr Garrett's leash to be unclipped for some time. Indeed, when he lost the climate change and water management elements of his portfolio to Penny Wong after the election, there were many who wondered if he would ever be let out of his dungeon.

But as Mr Hunt found out yesterday, when the dungeon gate swung open and the shaven-headed form of the Environment Minister hurtled forth in all its repressed rage, Mr Garrett still has plenty to be punchy about. Mr Hunt's question - quite a rational one - was whether the Government's plans to combat climate change would make petrol more expensive.

Veins bulging, Mr Garrett hollered an attack on the Coalition that was almost as full-blooded and throaty as his famed 1990 protest gig outside the Exxon offices in New York. Come to think of it, I wonder if the ExxonMobil executives (now deeply involved in Australian petrol pricing) remember that gig, and its conciliatory working title: Midnight Oil Makes You Dance - Exxon Oil Makes Us Sick.

SMH - [The Bewilderers: On the verge of a revolution](#)

Where most people see nature strips that need mowing, scrappy grass verges and useless "waste" land, Bob Crombie sees only endless opportunities for more planting. Mr Crombie is a retired National Parks and Wildlife Service senior ranger and TAFE teacher but prefers these days to describe himself as a "bewilderer".

"'Bewilder' is an old term meaning 'to become connected to life, the source, the spirit, God'," he says. All of which sounds pretty high-falutin' until you realise how startlingly practical Mr Crombie's "bewildering" is. With a couple of mates, he spends his spare time clearing weeds and planting out any public green space that catches his eye. "Once you start thinking, you see opportunities everywhere you look," he says.

When the inevitable question arises of seeking permission from whatever public body owns the land, he just grins. "We just go ahead and do it," he says. "If I see a place and think, 'Jeez, an angophora would look good there', I just put one there."

The Australian - [Oil Search earnings take a dive](#)

OIL Search, the PNG oil and gas explorer and producer, has suffered its first profit fall

in six years while flagging it may sell assets to fund an LNG project. In the clearest indication yet that the Exxon Mobil-led study into a PNG LNG project will commit it to the development by the end of April -- a move which will ultimately transform Oil Search -- the company's chief executive, Peter Botten, said a strategic review of Oil Search's activities now under way might lead to a decision to sell assets in North Africa and the Middle East. Mr Botten confirmed that Exxon was very bullish about the PNG LNG project.

Crikey - [Many causes, one effect: food prices go through the roof](#)

If you read the minutes of the Reserve Bank board's 5 February meeting or the Statement on Monetary Policy produced six days later, there's lot of discussion of inflation, interest rates, capacity constraints, rising wages and solid retail sales, but little in the way of discussion on food price inflation. That is now a major concern in the US and Europe, as well as China, India and other fast-growing economies. A combination of falling stocks, droughts and the rise of ethanol and biodiesel production, plus rising living standards and changing eating habits in Asia, is driving the worries.

Unlike in Australia, where the Reserve Bank is worried about inflation and wages being driven by shortages of capacity and labour, overseas the real concern is inflation driven by rising energy and food costs. The policy statements from the European Central Bank, the US Fed and the Bank of England have all mentioned it in recent months.

On top of record or near record prices for coffee, tea, dairy products, cocoa, vegetable oils such as palm oil and an upturn for sugar, copper, gold, platinum and oil also hit record highs or are near their all-time highs after an across-the-board rise last night. Oil finished above \$US100 a barrel in New York. Only one cent over, but it was the first time it has closed above this level after hitting a new intra day high of \$US100.10 a barrel. Traders said it was the result of a mixture of supply and sentiment factors, but also strong interest from financial investors (speculators).

Stuff.co.nz - [Big Dry hits wholesale power prices](#)

Wholesale spot power prices rose last week underpinned by low hydro lake inflows. Prices at the North Island reference point of Haywards rose 8.2 per cent to an average \$124.89 per megawatt hour (MWh), while at the South Island reference point of Benmore prices were 7.2 per cent higher at an average \$119.44 per MWh.

"Prices have settled above a hundred dollars and unless there some decent inflows that's what we'll see for the next few weeks," said an analyst. "If anything, the prices will continue to push up to \$200." The absence of Contact Energy's 357MW Stratford plant, out until the end of next month for maintenance, was also a factor in current high prices, the analyst said.

National inflows rose to 55 per cent of average over the week to Tuesday, compared with 52 per cent in the previous week. In the South Island, where virtually all power is produced by hydro power stations, inflows were 57 per cent of average compared with 51 per cent the previous week while North Island inflows fell 6 percentage points to 46 per cent of average.

WorldChanging - [Heat pumps: The Future has Hot Showers](#)

Heat pump systems have a continuous recovery cycle, so they work around the clock and into the night time when the air is a little cooler (this is when the video shows the hot water). It seems illogical, but even in cool climates there's more than enough thermal energy to heat water with no more electricity than it takes to run the mechanical work moving refrigerant and heat. Heat pumps are even efficient below freezing.

I met with Rod Innes, technical director of Energy Saving Concepts Ltd (ESCL) and he had some jaw-dropping statistics for me regarding the savings that would come from mass adoption of these solar convection heaters for residential hot water in New Zealand or Australia.

There are an estimated 1.1 million electric hot water cylinders in New Zealand, with 50,000 new units sold each year. Eighty percent of these new units are replacements, so assuming an even failure rate, the "fleet" is fully replaced in 25 years.

The consumption across all units in New Zealand is around 45 percent of domestic sector electricity and almost 20 percent of total annual electricity production. Heat pumps currently available on the market save around 70 percent of the electricity that would be used by an electric element water heater. Australia, which has similar usage figures, would reduce its annual carbon emissions by five million tonnes (PDF link) if heat pumps were widely adopted. If we replaced old elements with heat pumps as they failed (and installed heat pumps in all new houses), New Zealander would heat their water by solar convection as early as 2033.

The exciting opportunity here isn't just that 10 percent of the country's total electricity bill could be wiped, it's that there's still space for design innovation in heat pump systems. Rod showed me his key innovation - twisting the conductive tube that runs through coolant increases the surface area contact and improved conductivity by 300 percent. Adding a opposing twisted rod through the centre of the coil (a "turbulator") improves the heat exchange efficiency relative to space by a further twenty percent. That's an efficiency improvement to a mature product that already achieves between 250 and 400 percent efficiency.

SMH - [More sign up for Earth Hour switch off](#)



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