

5-1-2005

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Recommended Citation

Carnegie, Garry (2005) "Conserving energy through self-generation," *Public Infrastructure Bulletin*: Vol. 1: Iss. 5, Article 5.
Available at: <http://epublications.bond.edu.au/pib/vol1/iss5/5>

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CONSERVING ENERGY THROUGH SELF-GENERATION



Renewable forms of energy include solar, tidal, geo-thermal, bio-mass, small-scale hydro and wind power. There can be no dispute over the urgent need for the adoption of appropriate and viable renewable forms of energy generation.

Indeed, serious attempts to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions are to be strongly encouraged. Such attempts must embrace energy conservation on a truly massive scale. Unfortunately, power providers do not derive profits by actively encouraging energy conservation.

In Australia, power generation has become a haven for private power generators that are competing against each other for market share. Private power operators strive to be profitable by selling as much power as possible at appropriate margins in adding value for their shareholders. The natural environment, after all, does not prevail over financial wealth maximisation, despite the propaganda to the contrary.

We, in Australia, have been observing a proliferation of planning applications to erect wind turbines, for example, in an array of locations, including, in Victoria for instance, at Cape Bridgewater and the Bay of Islands along the beautiful Great Victorian Southern Coastline. The industrialisation of such treasured landscapes, in the interests of tapping renewable energy sources, is not a matter for local residents and regular visitors to become enthralled about, especially those proximate to the proposed towering and winding turbines. Rather, such applications have the strong potential to polarise local communities and to divide them for generations.

The present spate of wind 'farm' applications would be a little more tolerable to affected and concerned individuals if major government-led conservation campaigns were concurrently mounted to conserve energy on a major scale. However, this has not been the case and is unlikely to gain favour, so it would appear, under the present ownership and management structures for power generation and delivery.

In the meantime, many communities have proven their ability to conserve scarce water resources in recent periods of low rainfall in many parts of Australia. Fortunately, water providers remain in public ownership, thus affording governments with the

capacity to apply restrictions and to impose fines, if necessary, in order to limit water demand to the extent necessary. Accordingly, water conservation has become a success story in Australia.

The power industry in Australia, through privatisation, has evidently moved beyond such control. In order to conserve energy, and to develop good usage habits, an urgent paradigm shift is needed in our approach to developing and maintaining power infrastructure and, simultaneously, in our usage of energy.

Australia, as 'the sunburnt country', is unlike northern Europe where there is generally little warm sun but generally much wind. Rather, Australia is blessed with copious amounts of sun. For us not to make massive use of this natural and renewable resource for energy generation purposes is inexcusable. We should and can lead the world in this technology. It is indeed 'clever' to do so!

By installing solar power generation devices locally on our homes, apartments, offices, shops, factories, sheds and other properties, we will gain an enhanced appreciation of the energy we use and how it may be conserved, thereby better enabling us to reduce our energy consumption. Energy generated in excess of our personal requirements could be released into the grid for use by others.

Such developments, especially where they are very strongly supported by our respective governments, would have positive implications for energy conservation and, therefore, for protecting our planet, including our prized cultural and natural landscapes.

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