

Helping Traditional Power Producers to Go Green

One variation on the carbon permits proposed by the Ross Garnaut report would be to give base load power generators preferential ability to buy shares in alternative energy companies. Through a "carrot and stick" approach, traditional power companies could be persuaded to look upon alternative energy companies as sources of continuing and growing revenue rather than as competitors that are trying to eat into their market share and profits.

Rather than the punitive application of emission permits, traditional power producers should be offered offsets to invest in the expansion of "micro generation" alternative energy production and/or research and development in these areas rather than persisting with so-called "clean coal" and centralised power distribution.

Why Micro generation?

Energy losses from Power station to end consumer can range up to 78% - primarily through heat and transmission losses. However, generation of power at the very point of consumption would save transmission costs and turn any heat produced into a useable resource rather than being wasted as is currently the practice.

Through an enhanced emissions trading scheme, centralised base load coal powered generators or gas companies would find it advantageous to actively invest in micro generation systems such as solar or (the very promising) ceramic fuel cells. Daytime electricity needs could be supplemented through solar cells on roofs while night time loads could be supplemented through combined heat and power units such as solid oxide fuel cells. Any power generated that is excess to the needs of the consumer would be sold back to the grid.

The added advantage of this distributed generating capacity would relate to security. By relying on one or two sources of centralised power generation we continue to risk the viability of the whole community should these power plants suffer catastrophic failure or attack. By developing and maintaining a viable and extensive micro generation network we would significantly reduce the impact on our communities of any interruption of the base load electricity supply.

Australia is currently lagging behind Europe (especially Germany) in the promotion of alternative energies. The market **will** be huge in this area and Australia needs to get up to speed and become a front runner.

The decline and extinction of the conventional wasteful centralised power generation system is inevitable - it is just a matter time. By making active support for and investment in alternative energy industries a "win-win" situation for traditional power generators they are likely to actually become the champions of change rather than seeking to block and stifle such progress.

Robert Pitts