



CROW Newsletter

(Keeping our eye on the climate news)

April, 2021

BITS AND PIECES

Will Wagga go Zero by 2050? Keep an eye out for the results of the Council debate on Monday night.

Twitter comment of the week:

[Mike Carlton](#)
[@MikeCarlton01](#)

·Wouldn't it be terrible, defacing these lovely, lyrical Hunter Valley landscapes with those nasty wind turbines...



An eye opening discussion on the "Gas Led Recovery".



This video is a bit long but if you want a comprehensive explanation on why Australians pay so much more than the Japanese for our own gas (and many more consequences of our crazy gas policies) spend a little time clicking through it:

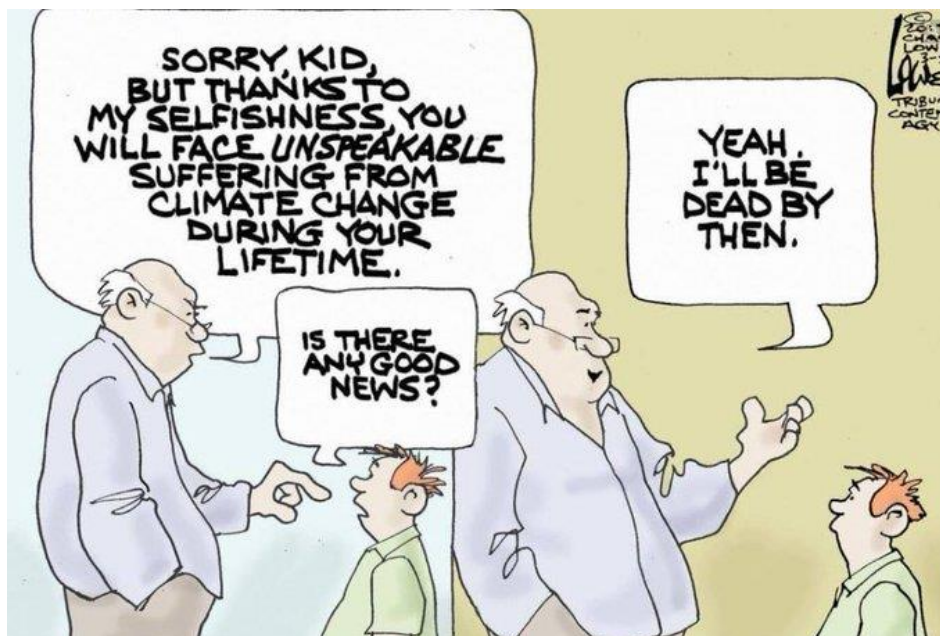
<https://youtu.be/c4SahEbl4Yo>

From Assaad Razzouk

Good climate news

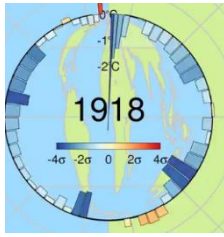
- [Greece shuts down 1.2GW coal plants](#)
- [US to align tax policy with climate goals](#)
- [GB breaks green record at 76% clean energy on Monday](#)
- [US considers 50% emissions cut by 2030, Japan 40%](#)
- [China to make world's #1 steel industry green](#)

And in more good news:



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

How Temperatures Have Changed Around The World:



Click on the heading above for an excellent visualisation of the way temperatures have changed around the world since 1900. The following notes explain what you are looking at:

Blue side for ocean temperatures, green for land temperatures
Each bar shows running 12-month average, advances one month at a time. Blue inner bars are for cool temperatures, red outer for high.
Thickness of bar is proportional to area of Earth's surface at that latitude

Are we on the edge of losing the Great Barrier Reef?

Australia's top scientists at the Australian Academy of Science have issued a stern and very loud warning call. The landmark report, *The Risks to Australia of a 3°C Warmer World*, issued by the Australian Academy of Science and based on peer reviewed science, finds, amongst other existential dangers, that we're about to lose the Reef, and much, much more. The next decade is critical.

The link in the heading takes you to a great video.

At least AEMO is planning for rapid change

The Australian Energy Market Operator has done the hard thinking about our rapid transition from fossil fuels to a renewable based system, Their [NEM Engineering Framework Report](#) takes a holistic view of the changing characteristics of the energy system to help facilitate an orderly operational transition of the National Electricity Market (NEM).

The document is amazing for the way it has set about figuring a way through the complex engineering problems of establishing an electricity grid that will handle the demands of renewable energy by identifying ten focus issues for development.

It is also notable for the optimism of the senior management of AEMO. Their Manager of Future Energy Systems is quoted as saying, "What the document lays out is just how incredibly fast change is coming, which is on one hand daunting, but also it is very exciting and we're very quickly entering into a space that no country has gone into,"

417.4 is not a good number – and 420 by the end of the year is worse

Concentrations of climate-warming carbon dioxide in the atmosphere have hit record highs, despite a dip in emissions during the Covid pandemic, scientists have said.

The latest measurements from the long-running recording station at Mauna Loa Observatory, Hawaii, show global levels of carbon dioxide are 50% above what they were when the Industrial Revolution began in Britain.

The data released by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California San Diego, shows atmospheric concentrations of the greenhouse gas in March averaged 417.14 parts per million (ppm), a new record high.

The UK's Met Office predicts monthly concentrations of carbon dioxide, the main driver of rising temperatures and the climate crisis, will peak in 2021 at about 419.5 ppm.

MONEY

Is the mining industry starting to see the (green) light?

Mining giant Rio Tinto has become the first Australian company to support activist shareholder resolutions on climate change filed against it, as it looks to strengthen its environmental, social and governance credentials with investors following a bruising year.

Investors in the nation's second-largest miner are scheduled to vote on two activist-led motions at upcoming meetings in Australia and the United Kingdom, which have been looming as new chief executive Jakob Stausholm's first public test on climate change.

However, Rio Tinto's board of directors took investors by surprise on Friday with the unprecedented announcement that it would urge a 'yes' vote for both resolutions.

The first resolution, filed by climate campaigner **Market Forces**, argued Rio's emissions targets fell short of what is needed to meet the Paris agreement's goals of limiting global warming below 2 degrees and requested Rio's goals be independently verified to ensure their compliance.

And Coles makes three

Woolworths, Aldi and now Coles aim to go renewable by 2025

[Coles](#) has pledged to source all its electricity from renewable sources across its brands by 2025 after signing another agreement to buy clean power from a Victorian windfarm. The move means all three of Australia's major supermarkets, including [Woolworths](#) and [Aldi](#), will be sourcing all their electricity from renewables by 2025 at the latest.

Climate change campaigners said the announcement showed a significant shift was occurring across Australia's corporate landscape.

Coles Group's chief executive, Steven Cain, told Guardian Australia the commitment, which builds on the group's previous deals to buy renewable power, was **responding to calls from staff and customers but also shareholders and investors**.

(It seems that commercial enterprises are more influenced by public opinion and demands than the federal government.)

POLITICS AND POLICY

Well done Angus Taylor - not. The fossil fuel lobby at work

The appointment of Grant King as chairman of the Climate Change Authority has been called 'disappointing but unsurprising'

Environment groups and the Greens have questioned the appointment of former Origin Energy chief Grant King as the new chairman of the Climate Change Authority, while former members of the authority have described it as a "win" for the fossil fuel industry.

The energy and emissions reduction minister, [Angus Taylor](#), announced King's appointment on Friday, along with Susie Smith, the chief executive of the Australian Industry Greenhouse Network, and John McGee, the former managing director of the Bank of New York Australia, as fellow members.

Clive Hamilton, a former authority board member, said the announcement was a win for the fossil fuel industry at a time when governments around the world were becoming more ambitious about cutting greenhouse gases.

"It's fascinating that the Morrison government should attempt to disinter the Climate Change Authority – which has been a zombie organisation for several years – but it's brought it back to oversee its retro greenhouse gas policy," he said.

Economist John Quiggin, another former member of the authority, said the appointments were "disappointing but unsurprising". He claimed that after trying but failing to abolish the authority when Tony Abbott was prime minister, the government had effectively achieved its goal by "appointing representatives of the leading opponents of effective climate action".

And Angus strikes again

Australian Government regulations are keeping EVs out of Australia

Managing director of Volkswagen Australia Michael Bartsch says he cannot convince his German head office to supply Australians with the company's top-selling mid-range electronic vehicles because of "embarrassing" local laws.

As a result, Australians cannot buy models popular in North America and Europe, such as the ID.3 hatchback and the larger ID.4 SUV, which would be significantly cheaper than the range of Teslas. If they were available in Australia they would cost around \$50,000 and \$60,000 respectively.

Mr Bartsch is required to make the business case to Volkswagen's German head office for access the models the Australian arm would like to sell, but as global demand for electric vehicles outstrips supply the company now routinely supplies markets in Europe and North America that are more welcoming to new clean technology.

"Every six months we do an update with a board meeting on the EV environment in Australia. They are sitting in waiting for something to change, you know, but nothing ever changes.

... and Turnbull gets axed by the NSW coal lobby

The Berejiklian government has dumped former prime minister Malcolm Turnbull from his role as head of an advisory body on climate change, saying the focus of the position should not be based on personality.

The move, announced on Tuesday morning, follows days of attacks on his appointment from what Mr Turnbull called "the right-wing media ecosystem". "It's just thuggery," he told the *Herald*.

US envoy John Kerry: "Coal use must be immediately abandoned ... This is reality"

The United States climate tsar John Kerry has told a conference that coal use must be immediately abandoned if the world is to have any chance of meeting Paris agreement targets. "We're heading for over four degrees [global warming], we're not on course and the time for discussion is over," Mr Kerry told a net zero conference hosted by the International Energy Agency and the British government and attended by world energy leaders including Australian Energy and Emissions Minister Angus Taylor.

"I don't want to be the scold," said Mr Kerry, the US Presidential Special Envoy for Climate. "But we're here because of science. This is not politics. This is not ideology. This is not some political goal. This is not a pet project of one, or two, or three countries. This is a reality."

Renewables shine over Australian summer, as gas share slumps to new lows

Gas supplied just 0.5 per cent of Victoria's electricity over the last summer, while renewables supplied 29.5 per cent.

In New South Wales, the market share of renewables reached 26.1 per cent, while gas supplied just 0.9 per cent of the state's power.

Across the eastern states,, gas fired power stations supplied just 4.9 per cent of the electricity generated in the National Electricity Market, while renewable energy sources supplied 30 per cent of electricity used in Australia's main grid.

The market share of gas generators peaked at around 13 per cent total supply in the NEM in Autumn 2014, but since that time, the gas of electricity produced by gas plants has collapsed, falling by almost two-thirds in just seven years, while renewables have more than doubled their market share over the same period.

The Climate Council says the trends show that Australia does not need to invest in new gas fired generators.

“Gas is a polluting and expensive fossil fuel that’s on the way out and has no role to play in our economic recovery. It’s driving up household power prices, and prices for our manufacturing industries, putting the sector at risk.”

Community batteries

The Labor Party recently announced a community batteries policy. This Guardian article explains the background.

In Australia one in every six households have solar, but only one in 60 have battery storage. For individual households, a community battery is a good way to lower costs by shifting the cost and the risks from installation, maintenance and replacement onto a private company or council to take care of.

For the people who run the electricity grid, these batteries are extremely useful. From the network perspective, rather than ripping out the existing cables and installing a larger one to deal with issues around peak demand, it is cheaper and more effective to put in a battery. This also helps deal with voltage and capacity issues created by concentrations of rooftop solar.

How does it work?

Sizes range from 100kW to 1MW and could be the size of a fridge or shipping container. Each household is then offered a certain amount of storage so that as energy is generated during the day, a portion of excess power is stored. During times of peak demand, this power can then be drawn on to power homes in the evening or support the grid.

Has it been done anywhere in Australia?

Several trials are currently being run around the country. Among the most prominent is one by Western Power and Synergy in Western Australia, which began its [third trial](#) late last year. In New South Wales, Ausgrid has begun its own Beacon Hill [pilot program](#) among 600 houses in Sydney’s northern beaches area. This is expected to be the “first of many”.

You can see more [here](#)