



The Bullroarer - Wednesday 30 January 2008

Posted by [Big Gav](#) on January 30, 2008 - 5:29am in [The Oil Drum: Australia/New Zealand](#)

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

SMH - [Railways Make much More Sense Than Roads](#)

Articulated trucks such as semi-trailers are involved in about 30 per cent of the fatal road accidents on the Pacific Highway. As the number of trucks carrying freight between Sydney and Brisbane increases, we will see more incidents like the fiery semi-trailer crash that blocked the F3 north of Sydney yesterday. Making the entire highway dual carriageway would improve safety and congestion but what is really needed is a better rail system so more freight can be moved off the road altogether.

Improvements to the Pacific Highway have resulted in even more trucks using the route. While about 168 kilometres of dual carriageway was constructed in the decade to 2006, the amount of freight carried on the route more than doubled. The Roads and Traffic Authority gave approval for multi-trailer trucks, bigger than semi-trailers, to travel the entire length of the highway in August 2002. This decision led to an extra 340 heavy vehicles travelling on the highway each day - an increase of 38 per cent. With more Sydney-Brisbane freight moving by road, rail's share has fallen - from 24 per cent in 1996 to less than 12 per cent now.

Moving more heavy goods between capital cities can be accomplished with a good rail system but is near impossible with the antiquated NSW system. The constraints include rail congestion around Sydney and "steam age" alignment on the route to Brisbane.

The tracks between Maitland and Casino started as branch lines built on the cheap in the early 20th century before later being joined. A train moving between Maitland and Casino traverses a total of 55 circles to the left and 55 circles to the right over "steam-age" aligned track with excessive curvature and extra length. Basic track and signal upgrades between Sydney and Brisbane are now under way and are due to be completed next year. They will improve average freight train speeds between Sydney and Brisbane from an inadequate 50kmh to just 64 kmh. To make rail a viable alternative for freight an average speed of 80kmh is needed.

The Australian - [A Record For Oil Search, But PNG's getting restless](#)

SMH - [Abolish Company Car Subsidy, Say Greens](#)

The amount of tax concessions claimed for company cars has been rising steadily and the blow-out has angered green groups. "These tax breaks are economically senseless, reward environmentally destructive behaviour and increase taxes that the rest of us

have to pay," the Australian Conservation Foundation's director of strategy, Charles Berger, said. "There are much better uses for \$2 billion than to hand it out to affluent corporate executives as an incentive to buy cars and drive them as much as possible to get the maximum tax benefit."

SMH - [Focus On Saving Bus Time: Minister](#)

The Australian - [Petrol Price Fell At Pump, But Drop Was Bigger For Wholesalers](#)

PETROL prices at the pump fell last week, but not by as much as the wholesale prices distributors paid.

The Australian Institute of Petroleum reported the average national price of unleaded petrol last week was 138.7c a litre, down nearly 3c a litre on earlier in the month. But the terminal gate price - the wholesale price that distributors pay - fell 5.4c to 130.4c in the same period.

The disparity came to light as oil company chiefs prepare to meet competition watchdog chairman Graeme Samuel to explain why prices did not fall further during the holiday period when global prices for crude oil were falling back from a high of close to \$US100 a barrel. Mr Samuel has been angered by what the federal Government believes could be an example of price gouging by oil companies.

Cleantech.com - [Torrens Energy reports hot geothermal prospects](#)

Australia's Torrens Energy announced today what it called "outstanding" preliminary temperature results at its geothermal project area in South Australia. The company said exploration drilling returned averages of 240 degrees Celsius at depths of 5,000 meters using temperature modeling, which Torrens said is higher than temperatures currently being used in Europe.

"One of the most exciting aspects of these results is that they are from drillholes that are adjacent to each other, indicating that the results may be highlighting a continuous region, and delineate a larger heat anomaly than anticipated," said Chris Matthews, CEO of Torrens. "This could become a major discovery right next to the power grid in South Australia."

The company said it's completed drilling four holes and started on further three drillholes over 2,000 kilometers deep.

ABC - [Hot rocks energy project gains heat](#)

The Australian - [Thanks, but no thanks: US on LNG](#)

SMH - [Power sell-off will lose NSW billions: study](#)

AFR (letters to the editor) [Replace false petrol hopes with real alternatives](#)

Allan Fells and Fred Brenchly believe that the heavy hand of regulation and more

competition will solve rising petrol prices. The simple fact is world supply of oil has been stalled for two years while worldwide demand is rising. Energy markets have fundamentally changed. In the words of former US Energy Secretary James Schlesinger "we are all peakists now".

The best insurance by governments of its people against petrol prices is for governments of all levels is to level with the general public that the days of cheap energy are over and that we need to make alternative arrangements. This means investing in more sustainable options such as a decent public transport system as well as walking and cycling. It also means getting freight back onto rail by improving our rail system. The public could also help themselves by buying more efficient vehicles, driving less, taking more public transport and walking and cycling where possible. Governments could also relax regulations on electric scooters from 200Watts to 300Watts.

This provides real alternatives than having to take the car and best guards against petrol price increases. It also helps reduce carbon emissions and helps reduce our merchandise trade deficit caused by our addiction to oil.

The real worry is for the public to be fed the false hope by governments and others that a bigger policeman will solve the problem of world oil supply. It will clearly won't.

David Bell

STCWA - [Scoop \(WA\) article on peak oil](#)

STCWA - [Newsletter January 28 2008](#)

Scoop (NZ) - [Wind uptake can ease electricity supply concern](#)

Scoop (NZ) - [Pulse Passes Electricity Commission Audit](#)

Belgium Radio - [Support for heat pumps grows in EU & New Zealand](#)

Radio Australia - [NZ PM gets UN climate change award](#)

The Australian - [Coal & Allied profit goes down the shaft](#)

FLOODS, infrastructure bottlenecks and a soaring Australian dollar have slashed profit at coal giant Coal & Allied by 47 per cent, despite a buoyant global coal market. ... While significantly higher coal prices are expected this year on the back of soaring power demand in Asia, and port capacity at Newcastle has been increased from 90 million tonnes a year to 102 million tonnes, further capacity expansion will not be completed until the last quarter of 2009. That will increase capacity to 113 million tonnes a year.

A new coal loading terminal at Newcastle is also being built but will not be finished until early 2010. In addition to having coal sales restricted, Hunter Valley coal miners have also been hit by shipping fines, or demurrage charges, as over-ordering caused ship queues at Newcastle to blow out to as many as 79 vessels last year. The queue is now down to a manageable 22 vessels.

The bottlenecks at Newcastle have left coal companies squabbling over how to ration coal deliveries through the rail system and port, with large miners such as Coal & Allied frustrated that shipments are being squeezed out by new entrants seeking infrastructure access.

BBC - [Is Big Business Still Thinking Green ?](#)



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