



Peak Oil In The New South Wales Parliament

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Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore recently addressed the [NSW State Parliament](#) on the subject of peak oil (via [Energy Bulletin](#)).

Tonight I speak about a serious concern of my constituents about the consequences of peak oil, which will have grave local and global impacts. The term "peak oil" refers to the stage when global oil production peaks and future oil production begins to decline. With the global demand for oil increasing rapidly, production declines are predicted to result in severe petrol price increases as buyers compete for supplies. Given the dependence on oil, including for energy, food, travel and consumer products, disastrous impacts on the global economy are expected. While some say peak oil has already hit and others say it will occur in 2030, it is essential that we prepare. New South Wales and Sydney's over-reliance on petrol makes us extremely vulnerable to impacts, and we must protect current and future generations. Given the consequences of peak oil and the serious threat of global warming leading to climate change, governments have a responsibility to urgently reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

Petrol price hikes have resulted in a depressing reaction in Federal Parliament, with each party trying to score short-term political points to outdo each other on the lowest petrol price. Cuts to the GST on excise and the FuelWatch Scheme will do little to protect consumers. Concessions will never match the increases expected as petrol prices continue to rise from the effects of peak oil. I was very disappointed to learn that the Federal Government's proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme involves sheltering the transport sector from petrol price increases. We need to urgently reverse our reliance on the private motor vehicle, which burns massive amounts of greenhouse gas-polluting petrol. Revenue raised from the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme should be invested in green, reliable and fast mass transit that provides a real alternative to the private motor vehicle. Wasting funds to compensate the industry and motorists while petrol is still affordable is a missed opportunity, and Australia's ability to prepare for serious peak oil will be compromised.

It is estimated that human and freight transport uses more than 60 per cent of all the oil consumed in the world. Transport provides some of the greatest opportunities to cut back on oil consumption. All transport should come under the responsibility of one ministry and one authority charged with coordinating roads, public transport, cycling and pedestrian movements as part of a planned and integrated network so that decisions address overall long-term public interest and plan around the need to reduce oil reliance. I have long supported inner-city light rail for Sydney, with heavy rail and

buses to outer suburbs. Fast train services are needed to the Central Coast, the Illawarra, Newcastle and the Blue Mountains. The State Government also needs to develop a freight movement plan for the Sydney metropolitan area and the wider State that reinvigorates the use of rail. The shift in port operations from Sydney Harbour to Botany Bay, Port Kembla and Newcastle was not accompanied by a new freight transport network and resulted in the dumping of more truck movements on the existing road system. While petrol is still affordable we should invest in major infrastructure transport changes, with construction commencing immediately, so that we are prepared to respond to a world of declining oil affordability. Now is not the time to shelve major transport infrastructure to poorly served areas. Responsible governments borrow for nation-building infrastructure investments that benefit future generations.

In August, the Sydney Morning Herald reported a Griffith University study that revealed 41 per cent of Sydney suburbs had increased vulnerability to rising oil prices. Researchers say that vulnerability has spread inward from the city fringes. The study notes that while public transport use in Sydney steadily declined between 2000 and 2005, sharp increases in the cost of petrol between 2005 and 2007 increased train journeys by 11 million. Where public transport is available, people will use it if petrol prices are high and particularly if the transport is convenient and efficient.

The City of Sydney's Sustainable Sydney 2030 aims to deliver a fully integrated transport system for the city centre. We would like to see an 80 per cent increase in public transport use by city workers and we will provide public space for people rather than vehicles. The strong focus will be on pedestrian and cycle networks, and our Cycle Strategy and Action Plan aims to increase cycle trips in the city area from 2 per cent in 2006 to 10 per cent in 2016, with cycling accounting for 20 per cent of journeys between two and 20 kilometres. We also need to reduce our use of oil in other non-essential capacities, such as packaging, where depleting resources are used for single-use packaging and then diverted to landfill.

But the Government has opposed mandatory extended producer responsibility schemes, which could drastically reduce packaging and increase recycling rates. Another thing that needs to be considered by government is organic farming techniques. They should also be promoted. I call on the Government, the new Premier and his team to develop a plan to transfer our economy away from oil dependence, thus reducing our vulnerability to the impacts of peak oil.



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