



Submission to Royal Commission on 2019-20 bushfire season

By  28/4/2020

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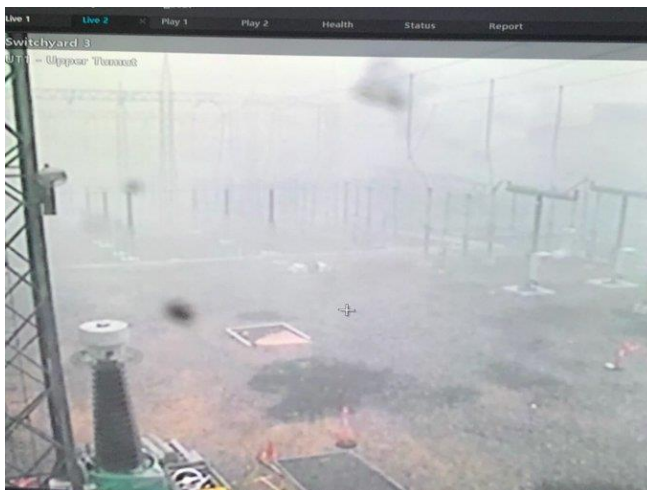
- (1) Precondition: Governments must accept climate change science and act accordingly
- (2) Power supply threats and its urban planning implications
- (3) Air pollution website and supply of masks
- (4) Management of simultaneous crises
- (5) Diesel supply disruptions during oil crises

(1) TOR: “Australia’s arrangements for improving resilience and adapting to climatic conditions”

The wording in this TOR drafted by coal wielding Prime Minister Scott Morrison says it all. The resilience to climate change can only be improved if at the same time the Federal government and all State governments pro-actively reduce emissions both domestically and by scaling back the export of fossil fuels. Otherwise the exercise is a Sisyphus job with no end in sight. Likewise, an adaptation will be impossible.

During the 2019-20 bushfire season there was a permanent debate about whether bushfires were caused by global warming or not. THIS HAS DISTRACTED THE MEDIA, MPs, DEPARTMENTS AND EVEN THE FIRE CHIEF FROM THE FIRE FIGHTING EFFORT AND HAS COST VALUABLE TIME. Therefore, it is a precondition for any action (like increasing fire-fighting capacities or changing house designs) that governments accept the climate science and act accordingly. A lip service to please certain voter groups but then a continuation of business as usual (like the NSW government recently approving a coal mine expansion) is counterproductive and not acceptable.

(2) TOR: “.. with respect to key preparedness .... Including ..... land use planning .....construction of public infrastructure”



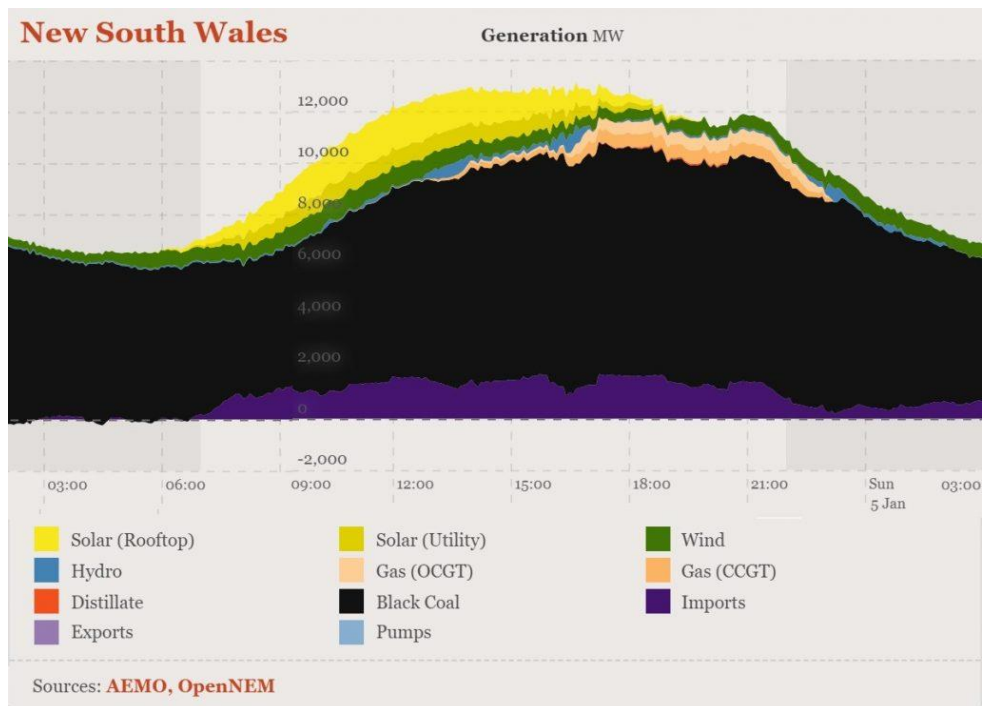
The bushfire season 2019-20 was so intense that a new type of threat to power supplies has emerged: dense smoke resulted in arcing in electrical switch yards.

< Upper Tumut switch yards

on 4 Jan 2020



Tumut 3 hydro power plant with 6 turbines (3 pumps) saved by dedicated crew



Power generation profile on Jan 4<sup>th</sup> 2020

The Tomago aluminium smelter had to be turned off. More details are here:

4/2/2020 Bush fires cause load shedding in NSW January 2020

<http://crudeoilpeak.info/bush-fires-cause-load-shedding-in-new-south-wales-january-2020>

This was not the first time.

14 Feb 2017 NSW's privatized giveaway coal plant causes load shedding in extreme weather

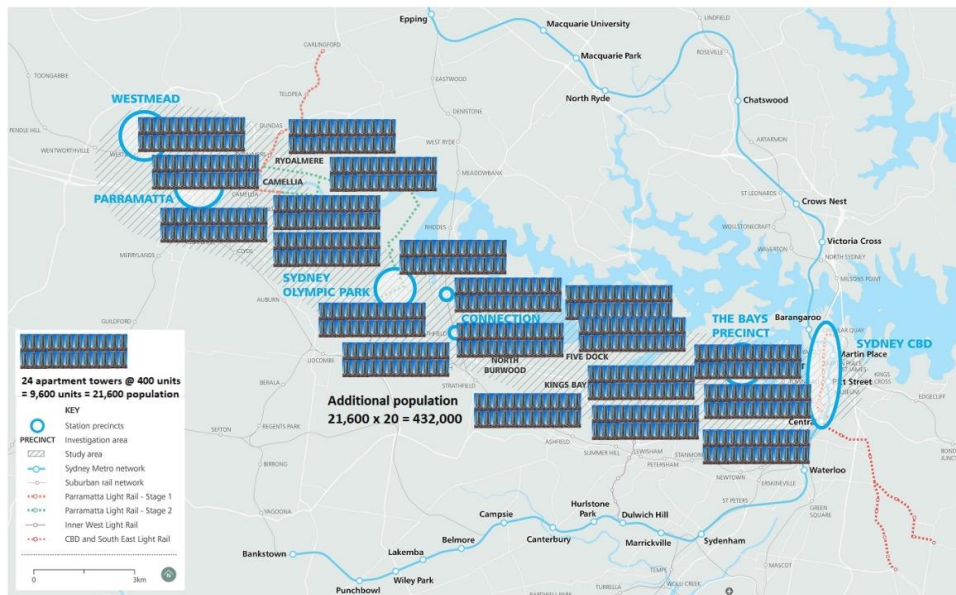


Tomago Alu smelter

<http://crudeoilpeak.info/nsws-privatized-giveaway-coal-plant-causes-load-shedding-in-extreme-weather>

Implications for urban planning:

If the resilience against blackouts is to be improved, the overall power consumption in the big cities has to be reduced. A first step would be to stop approval of new energy hungry projects like apartment towers, office skyscrapers, the Sydney Western Airport etc. Immigration needs to be curtailed to do this. Many inconvenient, far reaching consequences for governments.



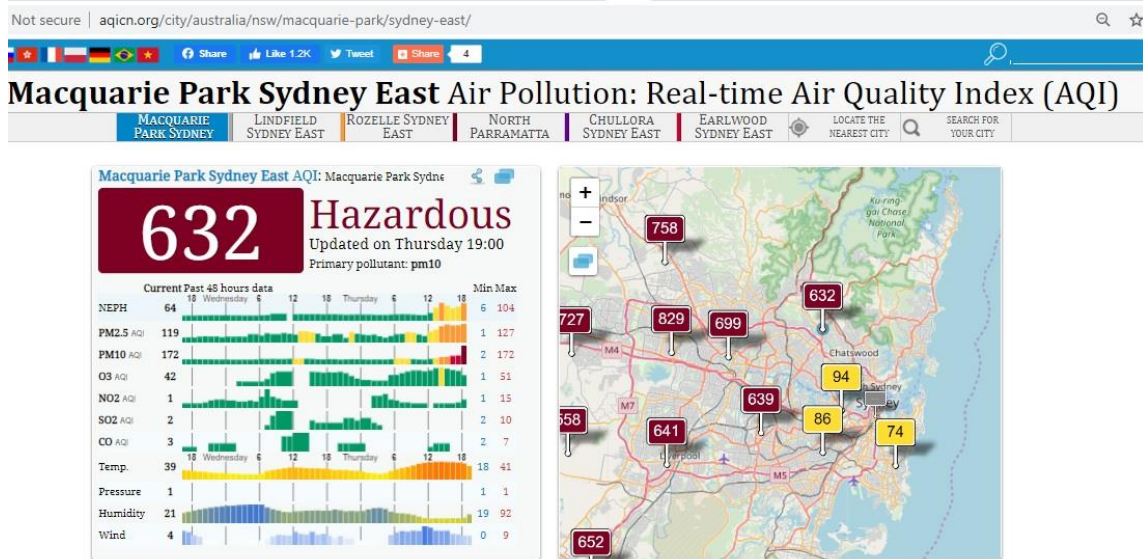
This pic shows the number of Opal sized towers planned for the Metro West project

11/3/2019 Sydney's Immigration Metros (Part 1)

<http://crudeoilpeak.info/sydneys-immigration-metros-part-1>

(3) TOR: “....reporting framework....”

It is important to consistently inform the public about smoke and haze hazards. I used this website:



Hazardous air quality on 23 Jan 2020, a fateful day

<http://aqicn.org/city/australia/nsw/macquarie-park/sydney-east/>

There must be an emergency stock pile of masks. They should be distributed when producing a Medicare card. A database could avoid duplicate or multiple purchases when there is a shortage. Governments must learn to manage ration cards and educate the public accordingly.

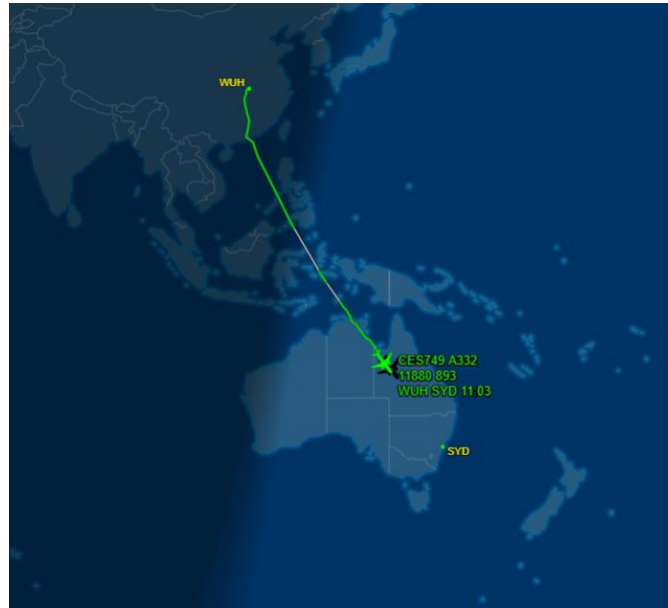
(4) TOR: “...impacts of natural disasters....”

Australia has not developed a mindset and culture of crisis management because most departments work on a business as usual basis and do not do regular, frank risk assessments. That is why the danger of the Corona Virus was not discovered early enough (notwithstanding the abysmal failure of the Chinese government to inform the WHO in a timely and truthful manner – which no doubt will result in compensation claims). On the very day (23 Jan 2020) a water bomber crashed near Canberra



<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-01-23/nsw-rfs-air-tanker-crashes-near-numeralla-bushfire/11893554>

the Federal government allowed a direct flight from Wuhan to land in Sydney



<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-01-29/coronavirus-timeline-from-wuhan-china-to-global-crisis/11903298>

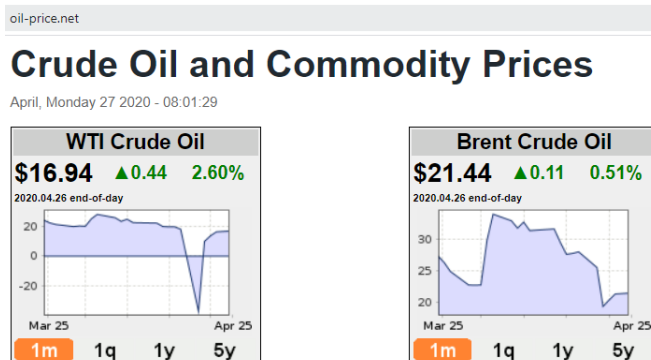
This means the government cannot handle simultaneous, let alone multiple crises. This must be practised in simulations.

(5) TOR: “....resource sharing....”

One such crisis still to come is an oil crisis. Oil demand is low now but if it should come back as wished for by all governments there could be problems to reactivate closed-in production capacities. The Norwegian energy consultancy Rystad warns:

“.....uncontrolled dismantling of parts of the [oil] industry. This would only come back to haunt the market with risk of price spikes 18-24 months down the line”

[https://www.rystadenergy.com/globalassets/pdfs/rystad-energy\\_covid-19-report\\_15-april\\_2020\\_final-public-version.pdf](https://www.rystadenergy.com/globalassets/pdfs/rystad-energy_covid-19-report_15-april_2020_final-public-version.pdf)



At current oil prices few oil companies can make money. They are not charity organisations.

The situation is instable and dangerous.

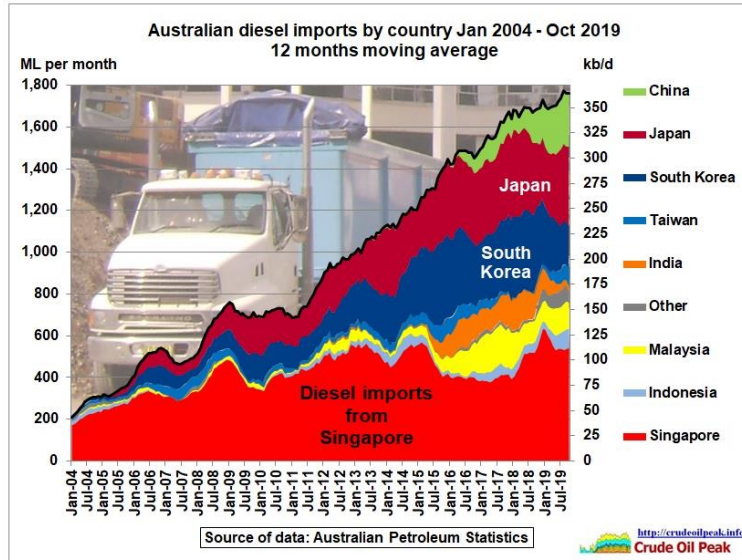
Suppose oil prices stay low until the next fire season.....

**Caltex closing Brisbane oil refinery is a ‘national security’ issue**

6 April 2020

According to the Brisbane Times, Caltex have said it will reopen the refinery when “margin conditions have sufficiently recovered”.

<https://www.skynews.com.au/details/6147375783001>



12/1/2020 Australia's oil consumption highly vulnerable to events in the Middle East

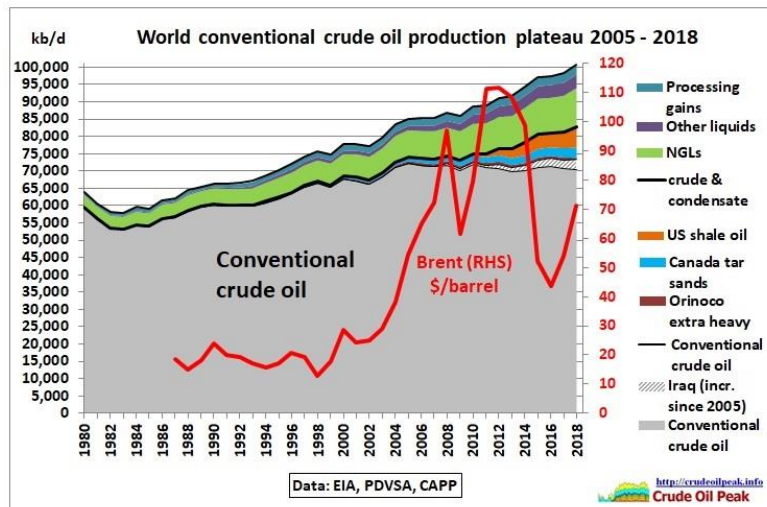
<http://crudeoilpeak.info/australias-oil-consumption-highly-vulnerable-to-events-in-the-middle-east>

Oil reserves in the US are useless when fire brigades need diesel immediately. Energy Minister Angus Taylor has no idea what an oil crisis means: <http://crudeoilpeak.info/my-experience-oil-crisis-1979>

26/8/2019

2005-2018 Conventional crude production on a bumpy plateau – with a little help from Iraq

<http://crudeoilpeak.info/2005-2018-conventional-crude-production-on-a-bumpy-plateau-with-a-little-help-from-iraq>



The increase has mainly come from US shale oil and Canada’s tar sands

Both are threatened by low oil prices:

Shale oil passed its peak without making money

Feb 15 2020

<http://www.startribune.com/schafer-shale-oil-passed-its-peak-without-making-money/567884742/>

U.S. oil firm Continental Resources halts shale output, seeks to cancel sales

24 Apr 2020

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-continental-resources-shale-north-dak/us-oil-firm-continental-resources-halts-shale-output-seeks-to-cancel-sales-idUSKCN2260PX>

With Oil Unprofitable, Canadian Producers Are Shutting Down the Pumps

20/4/2020

<https://www.fool.com/investing/2020/04/20/with-oil-unprofitable-canadian-producers-are-shutt.aspx>

Oil and gas industry CEOs pen open letter to Ottawa asking for financial help

6/4/2020

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6786762/oil-gas-drilling-alberta-help-federal-government-april-coronavirus/>

It is recommended that fire brigades keep their own decentralised fuel storage facilities including those for planes fighting fires.

General notes: the terms of reference were actually not very detailed for such a big event. Little effort has been put into thinking what went wrong and what could go wrong in future. The file in PDF format was not searchable. Why? That made work much harder when putting things to order according to the TOR.

Prepared by [REDACTED]

28/4/2020