

Andrew Bolt: Taboos just keep us all in the dark

Andrew Bolt, Herald Sun

March 15, 2017 9:00pm

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HOW often we've seen the kind of mad superstitions that have our politicians this week struggling to keep on our lights and gas. They aren't really new, these taboos on coal and fracking.

We've seen such things before — irrational taboos on everything from fish and pigs to uranium and genetically modified crops. The Nuer people of Sudan and Bena Bena of Papua New Guinea, for instance, would go hungry rather than eat chickens or eggs. Tasmanian Aborigines starved rather than catch scaled fish, a taboo brought in some 4000 years ago and not shared by mainland Aborigines. Hawaiians banned women from eating bananas and coconuts until 1819.

And Jews and Muslims will not eat pigs for purely religious reasons.

All such taboos seem to make no sense and only make people poorer, while the powerful use them to show who's boss — and who's more moral.

But, while the modern hipster — freed from faith — may scoff at them now, they now bow to the kind of taboos we once took as a sign of the primitive. Uranium and nuclear power have been made so taboo that we still ban nuclear power stations. In fact, Western Australia has just voted in a Labor Government promising to ban new uranium mines, just as Queensland does. That is despite nuclear stations safely producing 14 per cent of the world's electricity, while emitting virtually none of the gasses blamed for global warming.

And, no, nuclear power is not at all as dangerous as greens claim. The one nuclear power plant catastrophe occurred 33 years ago in Chernobyl, in a badly operated and dated plant. Moreover, the death toll was estimated by the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation in 2000 to be only 30 over the following weeks, with studies of the surrounding population showing "no increased risk of leukaemia" and "no evidence of a major public health impact related to ionising radiation" other than a rise in thyroid cancers in young children, which is treatable.

So you'd think we'd woken up to such stupid taboos. Yet now we face the terrible consequences of falling for two more. On Wednesday Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull tried belatedly to deal with the grim consequences of the latest — on fracking for gas. He called an urgent conference to stop the country from running out of gas supplies that don't only fuel your heaters and stoves, but gas-fired plants for electricity.

Much of this crisis comes from exporters selling much of our gas overseas for bigger prices, but another significant cause is our politicians giving in to green claims that fracking is dangerous. Fracking is a technique to break rocks deep underground with water and some

chemicals to release trapped gas. It's unlocked vast gas reserves in the US, but activists claim it pollutes the groundwater and even puts gas in your taps.

Bull.

A study for the NSW Chief Scientist of 2.5 million fracking wells around the world identified none that polluted groundwater and Australia's Chief Scientist, Alan Finkel, although a global warming alarmist, conceded that fracking "if properly regulated, it's completely safe". Yet that bull once more baffled brains. Victoria's Labor Government has now banned all gas exploration and drilling, even conventional drilling. Northern Territory has just banned fracking, too, and NSW bans it from most areas. Now, big surprise, we're running out of gas.

Meanwhile, South Australia's Labor Government is desperately trying to save itself from the consequences of another modern taboo — on coal. This government takes the wildly exaggerated global warming scare so seriously that its green energy policies drove the state's two coal-fired power stations out of business. SA is now so reliant on wind power instead that it has not only the country's highest power prices but the most unreliable supply.

In fact, the whole state was blacked out last year when the wind farms tripped the system during a storm, and 90,000 homes lost power again over summer when the winds simply died.



Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull. Picture: Kym Smith

The government's "solution"? To just double down on its taboo.

No, its coal-fired stations won't reopen — and Victoria's giant Hazelwood station that is South Australia's backup will still close in two weeks. Instead, the government will build

possibly the world's biggest battery, still only enough to power a small town for a couple of hours, and an expensive new gas-fired electricity plant for when the wind stops again.

But what does a gas-fired plant need for fuel? Oh, yes — the gas we don't have because of that other taboo.

Don't you want this madness to stop?