



Malcolm Turnbull with Chief Scientist Dr Alan Finkel.

[Terry McCrann](#)

## Cheaper power or more pollie preening?

Terry McCrann, Herald Sun, June 13, 2017 12:00am

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WE can have cheaper electricity and we can have reliable electricity. Or we can have prime ministers, foreign ministers and energy ministers like Malcolm Turnbull, Julie Bishop and Josh Frydenberg able to prance and preen at international conferences.

After the 2019 election, it will of course be their successors Bill Shorten, Penny Wong and Mark Butler who will do — even more — prancing and preening.

That is the simple choice indirectly and most decidedly unintentionally offered by the report into the energy market from chief scientist Alan Finkel — who demonstrated, incidentally, that whether or not he is a scientist, he knows next to nothing about economics or business reality or even just plain old reality.

Did he have a deal for us: we can supposedly cut our annual power bills by around \$90 a year by first spending nearly \$900 billion on more and more useless wind and solar ‘farms,’ more and more power lines looping crazily around the country, and batteries.

Believe that and I have a wonderful bridge, walked over but never been lived in, with never to be built out views of the Sydney Opera House and Harbour, for sale to you real cheap.

Did I say batteries? You wouldn’t believe how many batteries we’d need. We’d need so many under the “rational” alternative he proposes, we’d be having to put them in our bedrooms, our lounge rooms, our ceilings and heck, probably even our bathrooms.

Finkel wants to increase the amount of electricity we get from wind and more so from solar by anywhere between four and six times what we get now — using that word “get” a tad loosely. And to then avoid the whole of Australia “going South Australian” when, you know, the wind, well, don’t blow (or blow too hard) and the sun don’t shine, we’d switch to getting electricity from all those batteries.

That’s of course if the wind had blown enough and the sun had shone enough to charge them in the first place. On Planet Lunacy, formerly known as Australia. THE only way you’ll get cheaper, plentiful and reliable electricity, is the same way we got it for going on for most of the 20th century: from coal-fired power stations backed up by “peak” gas stations that could be fired up very quickly.

The idea that you could replace that combination with utterly erratic wind and solar and batteries should instantly strike anyone with an IQ of more than 100 as laughable — as insanely, suicidally laughable. But forget about households having to pay more and live with the “occasional” blackout, try persuading someone to invest \$1 billion in a new manufacturing plant on the promise of that.

And why are we even considering doing it?

Yes, the current state of play is a disastrous mess. No one’s really prepared to invest in major new power infrastructure except where the government is handing out big subsidies or mandating so-called renewable energy. So, in this paralysed environment, we are headed for more and more Hazelwoods; that is to say, other perfectly effective power stations following Hazelwood in going dark, and taking state and country with them.

But the core problem is our commitment to cut our emissions of carbon dioxide by 26-28 per cent by 2030 under the Paris Treaty — a commitment the even more disastrous Labor trio would increase.

When the three biggest emitters, amounting to more than 50 per cent of global emissions, are either out of the Treaty (the US) or formally committed under the Treaty to boost their emissions by between 50 and 100 per cent through to 2030 (China and India). And using our coal to do so!

We actually, irresponsibly and insanely, formally committed to Paris the day after Donald Trump won the US election.

Frydenberg last week said that had been done deliberately: obviously, to send a signal of our climate purity. It also meant that he and Bishop could head off to — yet another — climate CO2-belching talkfest in Marrakesh and not be “embarrassed”.

You face a future of ever-spiralling power bills and increasingly likely blackouts. But the pollies will always have Paris and mutual global talk-festing adulation.