

LETTERS

Coal remains the cheap and efficient power option

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It is encouraging to read articles and letters (17/7) showing a surge of participation and common sense in the energy debate. The Australian Energy Market Operator estimate for the cost of replacing retiring coal plants put at \$27bn does not say what the plant would be.

The existing installed capacity of black and brown coal-fired stations is just over 23,000MW. To replace this entirely by wind would require the installation of 69,000MW to achieve the same output. Based on 2013 pricing of Macarthur wind farm in Victoria, this would cost about \$165bn if installed onshore. Based on 2017 estimates for Star of the South it would cost about \$93bn offshore.

If the replacements referred to by AEMO are by coal-fired plant then it confirms that coal is certainly overall lowest in capital cost and required infrastructure will usually already exist.

It would be interesting to know what the replacement cost would be using nuclear that could satisfy demand and emissions aspirations.

Derek Fern, Box Hill, Vic

Over the past decade both main parties have failed the public by not being honest and direct about the climate change and energy debates. It has been left to a few outliers to tell the public the plain truth; that is, we can either have cheaper, reliable energy or we can lower carbon dioxide emissions through the increased reliance on subsidised renewables, but we can't have both.

It is shameful that a succession of leaders have concealed this truism behind a veil of obfuscation and policies that more resemble Ponzi schemes than policy. Newspoll (17/7) suggests that voters have seen through this ruse and realise the goals of climate alarmists are mutually exclusive. This is a victory for common sense over irrational ideology, given that Australia's contribution to CO2 emissions is negligible.

John McLeod, Sunshine Coast, Qld

The AMEO is proposing that existing coal-fired power stations are operated for 20 years more, and we have Bill Shorten arguing the conservatives are proposing to have billions of dollars tied up in building them.

Shorten fails to mention the many more billions that would be tied up in wind turbines. A 2000MW coal-fired power station could cost in the order of \$2bn, whereas for the same output requires 670 wind turbines which, at \$10m each, totals \$6.7bn.

A coal-fired power station would have a life of more than 50 years, whereas wind turbines would have to be replaced every 10 to 15 years.

We need to recognise that coal will be with us for much longer than 20 years. Even Labor with its renewable energy targets will require 50 per cent power from other sources. Where will this come from if they close all existing coal-fired power stations?

The most sensible option is to replace existing coal-fired stations with new high-tech plants.

R. Watson, Sunnybank Hills, Qld

It is possible to believe that some sense is at last returning to the energy debate and practicalities are being considered ("King coal to rule for 20 more years", 17/7). The Paris agreement will achieve nothing for global temperature levels but its directives have already resulted in increased cost and unreliability of electricity supply, as well as driven manufacturing overseas to high-polluting countries. Maybe in 20 years renewable energy will be sufficiently efficient and affordable not to need market distorting subsidies; meanwhile we are doomed to darkness without the base-load power of coal.

Graham Pinn, Maroochydore, Qld

Bjorn Lomborg and his supporters on the letters page appear to be labouring under the delusion that the climate change argument can be won with facts. Hey guys; sentiment trumps facts every time.

The sentiment du jour is "save the planet", but what does that mean?

Obviously not the rock itself, it will keep orbiting the sun regardless.

Perhaps "life on Earth", but that's been found under the Antarctic ice and in undersea volcanoes so it can't be ended by a bit of climate change.

"Human life" then? But people with minimal technology occupied all the difficult environments from the Arctic to the Australian deserts.

So it must mean “save our way of life”, the very thing that is supposedly causing the problem. We need a better sentiment, something like “climate change”; it makes you feel so, umm, warm and fuzzy.

David Leach, Armidale, NSW