

LETTERS

Evidence is piling up in favour of coal-fired power

The Australian, 12:00AM July 24, 2018

Terry McCrann's erudite analysis shows once and for all that coal-fired power stations should continue — and with less disruption from giving renewables their off again/on again priority ("Coal power has to make up for unreliable wind", 21/7).

Unfortunately, such continuation is likely to be restricted to get states' support for the energy guarantee. This means that the focus will have to move to more gas-fired power stations (which in any case emit 50 per cent less carbon dioxide for the same power produced as coal). And this means new mines to provide the gas. This is the way many countries in Europe have coped with accommodating renewables.

States restricting new gas mining will need to review their bans in the interests of meeting reliability and affordability of electrical power.

Geoff Dunsford, Lindfield, NSW

The points made by Terry McCrann show the stupidity of increasing our reliance on renewable energy. The sensible solution to the "crisis" stares us in the face: keep using coal and throw away renewables, and have long-term supply contracts for base-load power from those generators that can guarantee continuous service. Forget Paris accords, climate change and emissions reductions, and tear up renewable energy targets.

It is scandalous the policy that has led to the destruction of a reliable power system is still defended in the name of climate change when there is no valid evidence that there is any problem and, if there was, all of our pain would make no difference.

David Bidstrup, Plympton Park, SA

Thanks to Terry McCrann for looking into the risks and benefits of a free-market economy when it comes to energy. Australia's coal energy mix has obviously not protected the users from a near 200 per cent price increase over the past 10 years. The market is now doing its bit to bring energy prices down and yet McCrann is suggesting we cannot let the market run free in energy provision for this country because of a potential for price gouging by private providers of intermittent energy and lack of profitability for others.

This issue will be sorted by the free market, otherwise it could be regulated by progressive governments. If you do not trust the market to solve energy reliability and net stability, let the state take control and regulate it.

This would have the benefits of stopping price gouging, providing investment security and allowing us to focus on the crucial aspects of energy production — air pollution, climate change, job creation, innovation and long-term profitability due to low running cost.

Ulf Steinvorth, Tamborine Mt, Qld

Terry McCrann shows that significantly expanding the source of power from wind turbines (now only 5 per cent) instead of from coal power would also require additional back up investments to ensure the regularity of supply now provided by coal. But this additional investment would only be required for short periods, an uneconomic outcome that would need government financial support.

Yet the Turnbull government's energy guarantee does not recognise either this or the Australian Energy Market Operator's view that ageing coal-fired plants can deliver the cheapest electricity for the next 20 years. Realistically, it is impossible to keep existing coal generators providing cheap power (now over 60 per cent) and simultaneously cutting carbon emissions from that power's source. One has to go, with significant implications for power prices.

A reduction in coal generators would cause rising prices because the substitution of renewable adds considerably to the cost of production.

Des Moore, South Yarra, Vic

Terry McCrann proves with facts and reason why wind and solar are not suitable for large scale electricity generation sources.

If our politicians would just read his article, they would learn about duplication and complication, increased inefficiencies and costs, reduced reliability, and coal-fired power forced into sub-optimal operation — and all for no proven benefit to the nation or the world.

If, having done that, the collection of scientifically illiterate lawyers, political staffers, academics and such who make up our parliament still can't grasp the simple truths of McCrann's article, I suggest they consult a local small business electrician. Some reality would then enter their brains.

Doug Hurst, Chapman, ACT