

Energy Matters

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Copenhagen - Success or Failure?

..As the world's biggest per capita user we should be making twice the cuts of other countries....

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The answer depends on who you ask. I tend to land somewhere in the middle.

It can no way be considered a total success, since after two weeks the final declaration was not much better than we had before the talk.

Likewise it was not a failure, since we at least had all of the countries present at a single place and all agreeing that something needed to be done. They just couldn't agree on what needed to be done.

It was very disappointing that they spent so much time talking about the process on how to make a decision rather than actually making a decision. I would have thought this would have been sorted out prior to the meeting and that from day one there would have been a pathway defined and draft proposals ready. It reinforces the old saying "Committees keep minutes and waste hours"

It also reinforced how hard it is going to be to get a decision when each country has a very different perspective on what they want.

On the positive side, it was part of

a much bigger process that in reality will take years not weeks to solve. We just have to hope that countries will keep working on it and we will get there in the end.

The fact that was brought home to me is that Australia's position is going to be hard to sustain. Although it is poorly defined it seems to be that we will make 25% cuts by 2020 and 50% cuts by 2050, provided other countries make equivalent cuts.

I always felt this was morally untenable. As the world's biggest per capita user (we recently overtook America) we should be making twice the cuts of other countries. The attitude of other countries (especially China) suggests that they agree with me and that we will have to make substantial cuts before they will do anything.

The biggest concern is that maybe the leaders at Copenhagen were just grandstanding. None wanted to make cuts but all were happy to pretend, knowing full well that no binding commitment would come out of it. With Copenhagen over, they may return to "Business as usual" until the next conference.

Green Loans Update

The Green Loans program is going well and I have managed to complete my 100th assessment. If each household reduces there emissions by 5%, that's 100 tonnes of CO2 savings per year!

ANZ and Westpac are now offering loans as well which is a bit more convenient than the limited

number of credit Unions.

I have completed my loan application to get water tanks installed. It has been a bit onerous since they want a lot of information about my finances, but it should be OK now.

Hopefully, I will be installing a tank in late January!

Disclaimer

The views in this newsletter are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Green Loans program

Myth of the month: *Its better to use an electric heater in one room than to heat the whole house with gas*

“.. Heating five rooms with gas is the same as heating one room with electricity....”

There is some truth in this, but in most cases it is better to heat the whole house.

The problem with using an electric heater is that it generates around 5 times the amount of emissions for the same amount of heat delivered. This is because converting heat to electricity and back to heat is inherently less efficient. Since we use brown coal to generate the electricity it is REALLY inefficient.

Of course a reverse cycle air conditioner is better than an electric heater but still creates twice the emissions of a gas heater.

So, heating one room with electricity is the same as heating 5 rooms with gas. Since the heat in the other rooms is usually not totally wasted, you are normally better to heat the

whole house with gas than 1 room with electricity.

This is where a zoned gas system really wins, since it can easily reduce the area of the house that is being heated.

“But what if I use Green Energy? Surely that is even better than gas?” This has some merit, but if we assume all our renewable energy supplies are fully utilised and any additional demand is met by burning extra coal, then the answer is no.

Of course, if we converted fully to renewable energy and closed down all of our brown coal and gas power stations, we should revert to electricity... But that is a long way off!

Walk Against Warming

It was a great show of support with around 100,000 people walking Australia wide. The human sign on Princess Bridge was well done, although the photo on the web site has been enhanced to improve the contrast!

You can go to www.waw.org.au for more info

