

**TITLE: Variable and trustworthy**

**AUTHOR: Dan Cass**

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Reporter Michael Owen was a little too emotive when he described renewable energy as 'untrustworthy' ('Warning of an energy crisis to hit nation', 16 July). The accepted term is 'variable' and it has become clear that our energy system can readily handle high levels of variable generation.

Variable generation will work better still in our system as battery storage technology is adopted. South Australian Liberal leader Stephen Marshall has sensibly called for more spending on energy storage technology to make the most of the state's rich renewable energy resources.

California is a showcase for energy leadership. It has a target of 33% renewable energy by 2020 (compared to Australia's target of around 23% by 2020) and 50% by 2030. The Self-Generation Incentive Program will see California purchase 1325 MW of storage by 2020 and the state's non-residential storage market is already 24 times bigger than all other US states combined.

Even more pointedly, as some in South Australia advocate for nuclear generation, California is closing its Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant. The plant will be replaced with newer 'smart grid' solutions such as batteries and energy conservation, saving energy users billions of dollars and leaving no costly radioactive waste behind.

Rather than fearing new technologies, Australia should face decarbonisation like any other big reform. We need a new national conversation about energy to bring together political parties around common goals for increased competition and transition to cleaner energy. This will lead to more jobs, lower prices and lower emissions.

Dan Cass  
The Australia Institute, Canberra

Level 5, 131 City Walk  
Canberra City ACT  
Australia  
Tel: 02 6130 0530

