

Media release

9 December 2014

Majority of Australians favour solar and wind-powered future

New research from the Australia Institute finds that the health and environmental impacts of wind and solar technologies are far less detrimental than fossil fuels.

Two reports were released today, examining the impacts of, and broad public attitudes toward, wind power and solar energy. They find Australians are overwhelmingly more interested in a future fuelled by renewable energy rather than by fossil fuels.

"Australians are clearly concerned about the existing and long-term impacts of our national addiction to fossil-fuels. They clearly envisage a future powered by renewables," said Dr Jeremy Moss, Director of the Social Justice Initiative at University of Melbourne and a co-author of the reports.

More than 80 per cent the public polled rank solar and wind in their top three preferred energy sources. This stands in strong contrast to a mere 35 percent who nominated coal as a preferred energy source, while a further 60 per cent expressed distinct concern about coal and coal seam gas having a detrimental impact on the environment.

"Australia has some of the best conditions in the world for renewable technologies. It is estimated that up to 60 per cent of Australia's energy needs could be met with solar, and that wind power could provide an additional 40 per cent," Dr Moss said.

Despite ample space and favourable conditions, Australia currently produces only world-average levels of solar and wind power, and they account for a very modest portion of our national power supply.

The research reveals more than 60 per cent of Australians are concerned with the detrimental impact of coal and CSG on the landscape, compared with a mere 13 per cent who express concern for the environmental effects of solar power. It also finds no credible basis for claims that wind power may damage health.

"The government may consider coal to be good for humanity, and wind turbines to a blight on the landscape but, in the bigger scheme of things, the community simply doesn't feel the same," Dr Moss said.

"The government's recent efforts to scale back the renewable energy target is clearly out of step with strong public demand for more solar and wind technology in Australia."

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The reports echo findings by organisations such as GetUp, Solar Citizens and WWF whose research reveals the value and popularity of renewable energy in Australia.

Public polling conducted by the Australia Institute for Solar Citizens, released last week, found that three quarters of Australians - including 64 per cent of Liberal voters - support an increase of the renewable energy target.

"The health and environmental impacts of wind and solar are distinctly less than of coal and coal seam gas, and 80 per cent of people recognise that already," Dr Moss said.

Renewable energy sources are popular and safe choices for meeting the nation's growing energy needs, and Australians are really calling for that."

Dr Jeremy Moss, a co-author of the reports, is available for comment on 0425 753 124.