

Fresh gunpowder in the nostrils of politics

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Fresh gunpowder in everyone's nostrils has brought a new political reality.

It was only this month that US Army Secretary, Christine Wormuth demonstrated where her focus lies by introducing emission reduction [plans](#), which would de-fang her nation's military with features like:

- Investing in an all-electric non-tactical vehicle fleet by 2035.
- Significantly reducing operational energy and water use.
- Buying electricity from carbon-pollution-free generation sources.
- Reducing direct greenhouse gas emissions that result from Army training by 2028.

Overnight, urgent decarbonisation objectives and consultants' [guides](#) to [achieving](#) them have become quirkily *passé* – as irrelevant within a day of its publication as The *Australian's* [Green Power Player's List](#).

Modern military equipment depends on low cost, reliable energy as does its transport and its bullets, shells and missiles. The infrastructure behind this is equally reliant on energy as is the industrial strength without which military defence, as well as general prosperity, can exist only fleetingly.

The war in Ukraine is a wake-up call for matters much beyond ensuring defence capability.

Many are yet to fully understand this. The [ABC](#) loyally echoes Germany's Economy and Climate Minister [Robert Habeck](#), from the Greens Party, in suggesting that the Ukraine-Russia war will expedite the shift to renewable energy.

But elsewhere there is a recognition that the game has changed. Already in January, the EU had incurred the wrath of Greta by redefining gas as being a politically correct energy resource. The UK, having paused the authorisation of new oil and gas exploration leases in the [North Sea](#), is now going full ahead with approvals. In France, without batting an eyelid, Premier Macron has reversed his opposition to nuclear and his support for renewables. And in Canada, a resurgent Opposition Conservative Party has dropped its support for the nation's carbon tax.

[Bloomberg](#) remarks, with sadness, that in spite of ambitious Net Zero targets set at the Glasgow climate conference, '2022 already threatens to be the year of global backsliding. From the US to China, in Europe, India, and Japan, fossil fuels are staging a comeback, clean energy stocks are taking a hammering, and the prospects for speeding the transition to renewable sources of power are looking grim.'

A day before the gunfire started, writing in the Financial Review, the Turnbull appointed former head of Australia's Energy Security Board, Kerry Schott, endorsed the Brookfield/Cannon-Brookes proposal to close down the NSW Eraring coal power station. She claimed that the regulatory distorted market should be left to run its course and that replacing coal by renewables would reduce costs.

The Australian Energy Market Operator has presented its own plan for an electricity market that is parametrised by state and federal green policies, but the Commonwealth is alarmed to see its discriminatory policies designed to push coal power stations out of the market actually work. The proposed closures of Origin Energy's Eraring and AGL's Bayswater coal generators will not be permitted to close unless something turns up to replace them. And wind and solar won't do. Moreover, although Anthony Albanese has echoed Kerry Schott's words claiming there is an energy transition being driven by the private sector, his views will doubtless mature during the course of the election campaign.

Yesterday's dreams of unicorn policies where nature is treated as sacrosanct and is erroneously regarded as precarious will evaporate just as pacifism did in the 1930s with the rise of the dictatorships. Ukraine may be a long way from Australia but its fragilities are not dissimilar to those of Taiwan.

Australia has to change. Having vital business decisions taken by politicians and public servants responding to confected environmental concerns stoked by subsidy seekers has weakened the economy. Not only does this impact on living standards but it diminishes our ability to respond to foreign aggression, which recent events demonstrate remains endemic to human society.

Australia rejuvenated itself after 1982. The Hawke-Keating economic reforms were followed by incursions into government waste and a balanced the budget in the Howard-Costello decade to 2006. Since then, excluding the all too brief Abbott administration, government has regressed, bloating itself with bureaucrats and hampering enterprises with regulations.

Does Australia have a political leadership capable of resurrecting the reform process?