

Australia would gain from energy savings: global experts

Influential experts from Europe, USA and China who recently met in Sydney agree that energy efficiency is the biggest, cheapest, fastest way to cut greenhouse gas emissions and cut energy costs. But, they say, time is running out for Australia to heed the advice.



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Robert Tromp, Head of Energy Efficiency at the International Energy Agency (IEA), told the gathering that energy efficiency can cost effectively cut global energy expenditures and increase economic activity.

‘Our research shows that saving energy can buy time for the climate, delaying the complete “lock-in” of the allowable emissions of carbon dioxide under a 2°C trajectory – currently set to happen in 2017 – by an extra five years,’ said Mr Tromp.

‘Even though it is cost-effective for the end-users, two-thirds of this potential will remain untapped without specific, new action by governments.’

Meanwhile, President Obama has recently announced an ambitious goal for the US to ‘cut energy waste in half by 2030’. Ms Kateri Callahan, President of the US Alliance to Save Energy – which was instrumental in developing the Obama commitment – was also at the meeting. Ms Callahan said [energy efficiency](#) needs to be a bipartisan policy.

‘Forward-looking legislators are tapping into a huge pool of savings for households and businesses that give back to the economy and we are here to share results with Australia,’ said Ms Callahan.

In Australia, this year will be critical for tackling the thorny problems of energy market reform, electricity affordability, and climate change response, according to Australian Alliance to Save Energy Chief Executive, Mr Chris Dunstan.

‘If we don’t get this reform right then consumers are set to lose in three ways,’ he says. ‘Firstly, with higher bills at

home; secondly with rising electricity prices driven by unnecessary energy infrastructure; and thirdly with greater impacts of climate change.'

Demand in the national electricity market has dropped for four years in a row: last year it was 5.3 per cent below the peak of 2008. A large part of this fall is due to energy savings measures by government and by energy users in response to higher power prices.

The key question, according to Dunstan, is do we still need to spend an unprecedented \$9 billion per annum in electricity network investment, when smarter solutions are starting to work?

Mr Dunstan says that while the recent announcements by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to tackle network over-investment are welcome, the danger is that these reforms will take too long to help energy customers.

Over 300 experts, business people and policy-makers gathered in Sydney last week at the Australian Alliance to Save Energy Summer Study to discuss solutions for a lower cost, more efficient Australia.

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