

HD Roundup: **China** lights path for an Australia failing on climate-based innovation

BY Edwards

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by Edwards Christian

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As global climate pacts continue to evaporate, Australia's top public intellectuals and renewable **energy** experts are this week lauding **China**'s leadership towards "a world of decarbonized **energy**", raising concerns the resource-rich nation has failed to seize the subsequent opportunities presented by **China**'s viable **energy** alternative.

Economic and environmental frustration is spilling over here in the wake of

Australian research published in Monday's issue of the science journal Nature, detailing the ways in which **China** has broken the fossil fuel conundrum by building "manufacturing industries, enhancing **energy** security and contributing to reducing carbon emissions".

Speaking exclusively to Xinhua, Ross Garnaut, a former Australian Ambassador to **China**, said Australia was being left behind on the economic and ethical opportunities of **China**'s world- leading renewable policies.

"The Australian political and business elite have missed this turning point in **Chinese** development and therefore this opportunity," Garnaut said.

CHINA MORE GREEN THAN JUST BLACK AND WHITE

While the crux of western discussion of **China**'s environment has been to describe **China** as an **energy**-hungry juggernaut, intent on sucking the marrow out of traditional carbon-based fuels, the reality is far less black and white, and, in fact, a lot more green.

China's 20 years of rapid economic and social development that has so astonished the world came at a high-cost in terms of global emissions, Garnaut, one of Australia's most respected public intellectuals, said.

"And then **China** took the world by surprise again," he added. "The pattern of **Chinese** economic growth changed, towards less **energy**-intensive activity and less emissions-intensive **energy**," Garnaut explained.

While Australia's own national programs to combat climate change evaporated like so much of the rhetoric that marked equally ineffectual global pacts like the Kyoto protocol, Garnaut said **China**, rather than follow suit, galvanized its economic programs into a sustainability scenario that left the developed world in its wake.

"The effects of the structural changes... have again transformed expectations of what is possible in global climate change mitigation, this time in a positive direction," Garnaut said.

AN OPPORTUNITY LOST

Garnaut's lamentation for Australia's once bold approach to combating climate change makes the subsequent economic blowback a harsh reality.

Australian **coal** exporters are scratching their heads at another expression of Beijing's determination to deliver on its climate promises, this week slamming the brakes on imported **coal** with more than 16 percent ash and three percent sulfur from 2015.

The **Chinese** Government's latest step forward in utilizing alternative **energy** is exposing both Australia's environmental double standards and its **mining** industry to **billions** of dollars in lost exports.

According to Garnaut, Australia's decision makers, giddy with the riches of a decade-long, **China**-driven **mining** boom, have simply failed to read the signs of **China**'s commitment to renewable energies.

"It's an elementary failure of observation, analysis and empathy," said Garnaut.

SHORT-SIGHTED

Dr. Chris Riedy is an associate professor and co-director at the University of technology's Institute for Sustainable Futures.

Riedy believes that while **China** is marching forward, Australia is stomping off in the other direction.

"**China** has become demonized for having the highest greenhouse gas emissions in the world. But **China** is the leading manufacturer of **wind** turbines and **solar** panels, is rapidly deploying renewable **energy** and is moving towards carbon pricing," said Riedy

Riedy, whose own analysis of GreenPower -- a government accreditation program that enables electricity providers to **purchase** renewable **energy** on behalf of consumers -- is itself under attack by the ruckus surrounding Australia's revision of the Renewable **Energy** Target (RETT).

Riedy told Xinhua that Australia's decision to repeal carbon pricing and potentially withdraw support for renewable **energy** is "short sighted in the extreme."

"Australia's reliance on fossil fuels, both domestically and for overseas markets, is environmentally reckless and economically shortsighted. Renewable **energy** is the market of the future and Australia is being left behind," Riedy added.

THE PINCH OF CARBON LIBERATION

Having "axed the tax", the pre-election pledge of Prime Minister Tony Abbott to remove the world's first carbon tax, Australia has given over to, in the words of John Mathews, professor of strategic Management at Macquarie University and Hao Tan, a senior lecturer of the International Business at the University of Newcastle, a wave of "anti-renewables rhetoric and negative reaction."

But perhaps more importantly, the resource-rich nation, just emerging from a **China**-driven **mining** boom, will be among the first countries to feel the pinch of **China**'s liberation from Australian fossil fuels.

The implications, if not the philosophy of renewables, should be devastatingly clear to Australia's **energy** sector, scholars on the matter maintain.

China has outlined further expectations on **wind** and **solar** capacity.

The outline revealed an increase that will almost double the capacity of all forms of Australia's current power generation.

According to Ross Garnaut, the increase in **Chinese solar** power capacity "will exceed by a wide margin" of

Australia's total electricity generation capacity.

This may be good news for the world, but not for an Australian economy seemingly intent on turning away from renewables, in favor of a fossil-fueled Trojan Horse.

HOPE IS RENEWABLE

Writing in the science journal Nature, John Mathews and Hao Tan said that the Middle Kingdom is driving down renewable costs, divesting the world's economic engine of fossil fuel dependency and showing all nations a viable **energy** alternative.

The Australian researchers delivered a comprehensive review of **China's** world-leading renewable practices, concluding that by emphasizing renewable markets and committing to **wind** power, **solar**, batteries and other innovations, a channel is being carved to apply renewables as "more than just agents for reducing carbon emissions."

"**China** shows us just such a way. By boosting markets in water, **wind** and **solar** power, **China** is driving down costs and accelerating the uptake of renewable **energy**," Tan and Mathews said.

"We argue that this is contributing more than any other country to a climate change solution, and could be viable alternative to international climate agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol, which have been so ineffective in cleaning up the world's still carbon- heavy **energy** supplies," they added.

Moreover, by leading the world in renewable investments, **China** is essentially enhancing the country's **energy** security and not solely as a means of reducing carbon emissions.

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