

Farewell to fossil fuels

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FOSSIL FUELS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED TO HISTORY, THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION SAYS.

Incentives to replace petrol and diesel cars with electric vehicles and using renewable energy sources for industrial heat are among recommendations in the commission’s low-carbon report released today.

Noting the rapid rise in emissions from the energy sector since 1990, the commission recommends a carrot-and-stick approach to the problem, including:

- Incentives to scrap fossil-fuel vehicles.
- The removal of tariffs on low-emissions vehicles.
- The introduction of fuel standards, congestion charges on roads and grants for low-carbon fuels like biofuels.

It also calls on the Government to take a lead in phasing out coal and other fossil fuels for heating in government buildings.

The report is being welcomed by the Bioenergy Association, which says the time for talking is over.

Main opportunities

“The Productivity Commission has set out in a very clear manner the main opportunity areas for taking action to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050,” said chief executive Brian Cox.

“It has also identified key policy areas which should be addressed. We now need to act on these and many are low cost and easy to achieve.”

Cox says it is heartening to see the commission recommending a ban on fossil fuels in Government buildings.

“By Government showing leadership by eliminating its own fossil fuel consumption this will set a good role model for the private sector to follow,” he said.

“Each year we see an increase in the number of new biomass fuelled heating facilities being installed throughout the country.

Waste streams

“We see the capability of the industry supplying biomass fuel increasing as demand for the fuel increases. There are few barriers that are not manageable so leadership from Government will provide even greater stimulus to replacing coal use for making process heat.”

Moves like converting organic waste into useable biogas will reduce the discharge of methane as a greenhouse gas, into the air.

“Waste to energy is technically possible but management of the waste streams will be necessary before it can become wide spread,” Cox said.

“That will require leadership from local government. However, as cities like Vancouver are already showing – it is easy and doesn’t cost a lot of money, just leadership.”

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