

Monitor 2007-2008 Supplementary Report on Clean Energy

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SUMMARY A comparison of the 2007 and 2008 Monitor survey results showed that Australians continue to feel comfortable with wind farms and uncomfortable with nuclear power. In the 2008 Monitor we added questions about comfort with 'clean coal' technology and the government's proposed carbon emissions trading scheme. Australians showed some ambivalence about these proposed strategies for reducing carbon pollution.

In 2007 the Swinburne National Technology and Society Monitor examined Australians' levels of comfort with two alternative energy sources, wind farms and nuclear power plants. The 2007 sample of 1000 Australians reported a high level of comfort with wind farms, but a good deal of discomfort with nuclear power (see Table 1 below, see Monitor 2007 for full report).

In 2008 the Swinburne National Technology and Society Monitor again surveyed 1000 Australians. That sample reported similar levels of discomfort with nuclear power and comfort with wind power (see Table 1 below, see 2008 Monitor for full report). Table 1 summarizes the 2007 and 2008 findings. The level of discomfort with nuclear power has remained fairly constant. Even though nuclear power is sometimes touted as a source of clean energy, less than one third of respondents were comfortable with its use in Australia. In contrast, respondents remain very comfortable with wind farms, with 4 out of 5 reporting comfort with the use of this clean and renewable energy source.

Table 1. Percentages and mean ratings illustrating Australians' levels of comfort with wind farms, nuclear power, clean coal and carbon emissions trading.

2007 N = 1000 2008 N = 1000	% Not Comfortable	% Not Sure	% Comfortable	Mean Rating 0 - 10 scale
2007 wind farms	6.9	11.8	81.3	8.15
2008 wind farms	4.8	8.9	86.3	8.31
2007 nuclear power	53.1	18.0	28.9	3.86
2008 nuclear power	52.4	16.6	31.0	3.91
2008 clean coal	17.4	29.2	53.4	6.44
2008 carbon trading	26.7	27.2	46.1	5.68

Note: ratings were collapsed into categories (0 to 4 = not comfortable, 5 = not sure, 6 to 10 = comfortable) to yield percentages.

To further our understanding of Australians' views on strategies to reduce carbon emissions, we included questions about comfort with clean coal and the government's proposed carbon pollution reduction scheme. On average, these 2008 ratings hovered around the middle of the 11-point rating scale, suggesting that there may be some confusion or ambivalence about these options. Nearly half the sample was unsure or not comfortable about clean coal. More than half the sample was unsure or uncomfortable about a carbon trading scheme. Further research is needed to clarify Australian views on these proposed environmental strategies.