

# PEAK OIL & SOCIAL SERVICES

*A Presentation by the West Australian  
Council of Social Service (WACOSS)  
Consumer Utilities Project*

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## About WACOSS

*WACOSS and its members share a vision of a socially just and sustainable Western Australian society where all people have access to the resources and opportunities necessary for their wellbeing.*

*We operate the Consumer Utilities Project as a part of our core policy and advocacy work.*

# Consumer Utilities Project

1. *Provide information, education and training regarding essential service issues;*
2. *Support consumer representation in decision-making processes regarding utility issues;*
3. *Research issues affecting utility consumers;*
4. *Develop policy and advocate on behalf of utility consumers; and*
5. *Facilitate partnerships between stakeholders in utility service provision.*

# WACOSS Principles for Essential Services

*WACOSS has adopted a Charter of Principles for energy and water:*

- *sustainable*
- *accessible*
- *affordable*
- *appropriate*
- *accountable*

## **WACOSS Policy**

*WACOSS asserts the right of all consumers to be guaranteed access to essential services regardless of a capacity to pay.*

*Or in other words:*

*WACOSS does not support the disconnection of access to essential services due to a customer being in financial hardship.*

## ESSENTIAL SERVICES

*“Evidence indicated the importance of ensuring access to low income households to essential utilities such as electricity, gas, water and telephone services. Those services provide the basic means by which any household is able to function in a modern society.”*



- Senate Poverty Inquiry 2004

## ESSENTIAL SERVICES

*“Reliable, affordable and sustainable energy services are critical to Australia’s economic and social wellbeing ... they are essential for supporting basic quality of life”*

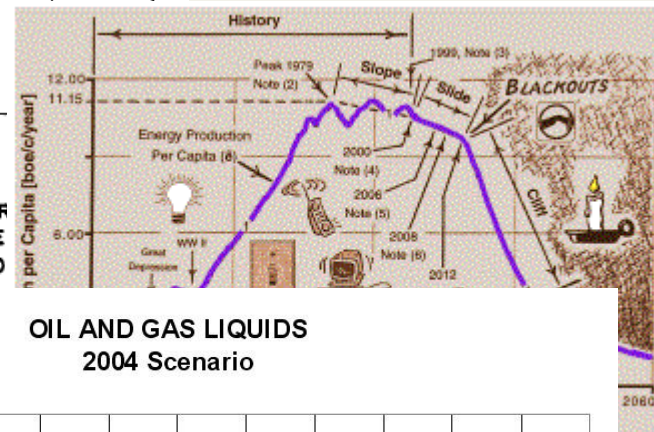
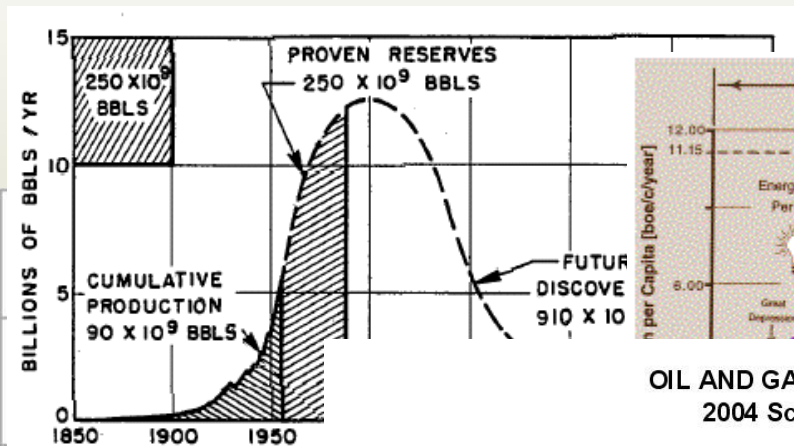
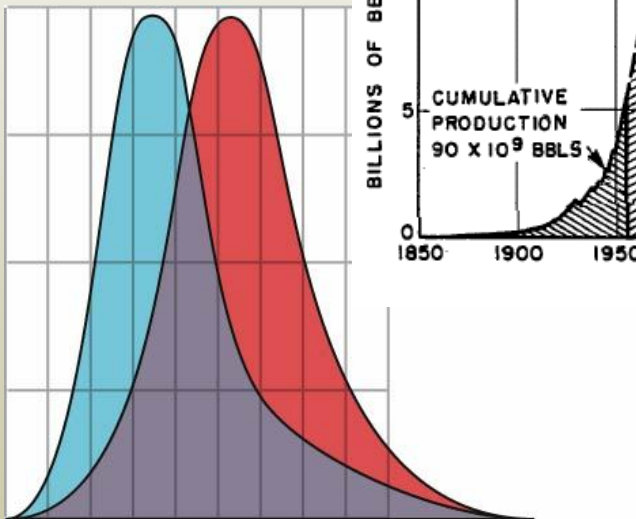
- Productivity Commission 2005

## But ....

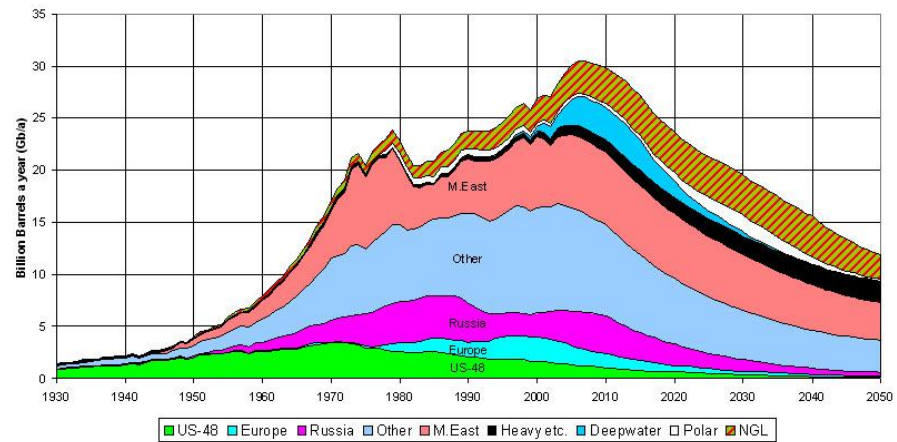
- The real cost of energy provision continues to rise.
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions need to be radically reduced.
- Governments and Commerce demand full cost recovery of energy from consumers and true price reflectivity (less subsidies).

***Similar issues emerge when we talk about the effects of, and appropriate responses to Peak Oil***

# PEAK OIL



OIL AND GAS LIQUIDS  
2004 Scenario



# WA - It's the Cost of Living ....

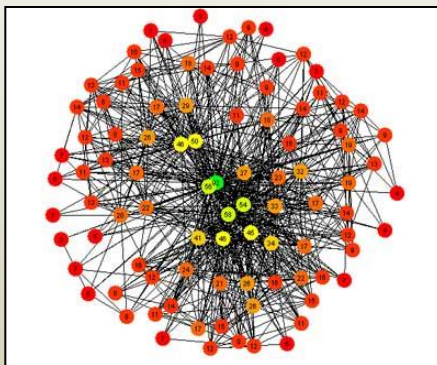
- Food availability and affordability
- Appropriate accommodation availability
- Energy costs
- Transport costs

Add Peak Oil & you  
Have the perfect storm



# PEAK OIL & Social inclusion

## Social Inclusion



- Access to the social life of the community
- Access to government and NGO services
- Access to employment or education

# PEAK OIL & SOCIAL INCLUSION

Development of concepts of social inclusion came out of context of access to transport. Effects:

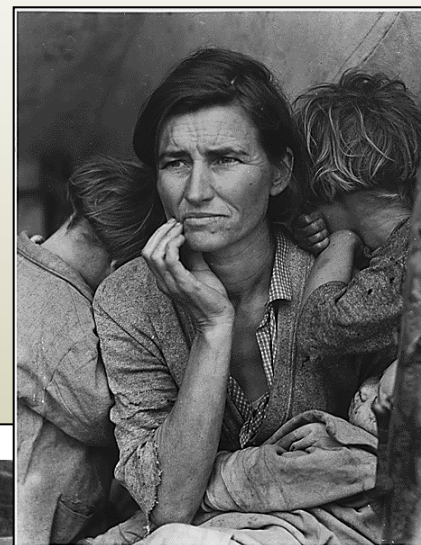
- Physical
- Economical
- Temporal
- Spatio-geographic
- Psychological

**It's all connected**



# SOCIAL SERVICES IN WA

- Limited increases to funding over last 10 years
- Continual increases in demand
- New groups requiring assistance
- Many services currently at breaking point
- The 'Boom' has not been for everyone



# SOCIAL SERVICES IN WA

- Often highly centralised (Health, Welfare)
- NGOs more accessible, but not in large enough amounts or;
- Highly reliant on cheap personal transport in order to deliver services



## SOCIAL SERVICES – A CASE STUDY

### HOME & COMMUNITY CARE (HACC)

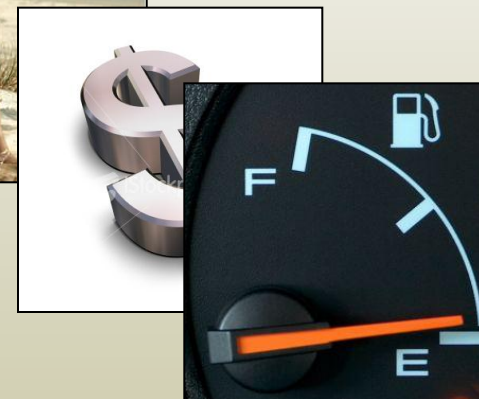
- 3,100 funded organisations
- \$1.5 billion in funding (2007/08 year)
- 750,000 people per year
- Most service recipients aged 75-90 years old – low mobility
- Industry with high turnover and an ageing workforce
- Highly dependent on cheap transport in order to operate service model



# HACC in WA

## RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

- Ageing workforce
- Low rates of remuneration
- Increasing cost of fuel for work purposes



***Is this a sustainable model for delivering services?***

# PEAK OIL, SOCIAL SERVICES & SOCIAL EQUITY

*So – What's the Answer?*



## Transport

- Increased investment in public transport
- Prioritisation for those with special needs (PT)
- Tradeable liquid fuel allowances (although may disadvantage some)
- Transport oriented development and planning



# PEAK OIL, SOCIAL SERVICES & SOCIAL EQUITY

## ACCOMMODATION



- Incentives for multi-generational households
- Energy efficient housing
- Equitable utility pricing
- Investment in appropriately located public housing

# PEAK OIL, SOCIAL SERVICES & SOCIAL EQUITY

## SOCIAL SERVICES



- Reconsider social services
- Appropriately distributed, resourced local services
- Community hubs – multi-services
- Coordination of existing services that require transport
- Devolution of centralised government services

# PEAK OIL, SOCIAL SERVICES & SOCIAL EQUITY

*The Choice:*



**Are these problems a private matter, or a  
public one?**

***THANKYOU***

**Questions?**