Reconnoitre Energies

ENERGY UNWRAPPED

# First Responder

Word association applied to the global energy sector

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13 February 2026 | Published with ANZMEX Business Council

## Introduction

Word association is a fast-paced dinner party word game where you respond immediately to what someone else said. There needs to be a clear link to what the previous topic was. First responses, speed and no hesitation are essential — you literally say the first things that you think of.

Invented in 1879, and later made famous by psychiatrist Carl Jung, the technique was developed to explore cognitive responses, emotional reactions and the sub-conscious. Here's what happened when I tried to be first responder, adapted for the energy sector:

- Australia? Lots of LNG & minerals; short of domestic natural gas, now dependent on overseas refineries.
- New Zealand? No refineries, hydro & geothermal pioneers, ban on oil & gas exploration 2018, lifted 2025.
- Mexico? Needs E&P investors, 20 years of falling crude oil production, now dependent on US natural gas imports.
- China? A new coal or gas-fired power plant every few weeks; fast-tracking solar, solar and more solar, plus EVs.
- The UK? Pivot to EVs/hybrids & clean electrons while decimating offshore oil & gas; birthplace of earth science.
- USA? The world’s energy science & technology supermarket, Houston is the global capital for oil & gas.
- India? Big buyer of cheap Russian oil, giant energy market where coal is still king, while solar growing rapidly.
- Oil? Price, supply/demand, volatility, refining, big geopolitics — Middle East, Russia, China, Brazil, Venezuela, USA.
- Shale? Made in USA, fracking changed oil & gas forever; Argentina, Canada, China onshore all important.
- Natural gas? Long pipelines (China, Russia, Europe), associated or non-associated, flaring, plastics, liquefy.
- LNG? Enormous growth, a key fuel in energy security e.g. Europe, and a bridge to a low carbon future.
- Carbon capture & storage? Waste disposal business that needs a viable commercial model and investors.

- Hydrogen? Keep an eye on wells drilling for natural hydrogen; CCS + hydrogen is a route to a clean future.
- Trees? Nature's carbon sequestration, we need to grow trillions more; stop chopping down and burning them!
- Geothermal? Heat, cooling & power, under-invested, under-explored and under-utilised; secure energy.
- Nuclear? Energy independence & emissions free but capital intensive; small modular reactors add versatility.
- Iron & steel? And cement; cannot live without them; rigs, platforms, pipes, pylons, cables, transport, buildings.
- Copper and tin? Essential for the energy transition and electrifying everything; aluminium too.
- Lithium? Ion batteries, evaporation of brines — lithium triangle, oilfield & geothermal fluids, hard rock mining.
- Cobalt? Mostly mined in Democratic Republic of Congo, used in mobile, laptop and EV rechargeable batteries.
- Batteries? Our future. Big, small, fixed, portable, domestic, utility scale, e.g. California, Australia!

Next time you are at a dinner party and the conversation fades, but it is too early to make excuses and leave, you can liven things up with a quick-fire round of Energy Word Association. One goal is that the final word used must be the same as the first word used. Word Association reveals something about your cognitive processes and those of your fellow guests. You can use it to successfully develop messaging around energy.

Remember, no hesitation allowed. Enjoy!

## About the Author

Chris writes an occasional series of topical articles on energy for ANZMEX. Between 2019 and 2024 he authored a series of 50 widely read ANZMEX 'Energy Matters' op-eds that tackled big energy issues using real-life personal experiences, and extensive research. Chris runs an award-winning advisory service, Reconnoitre Energies, offering insights to inform, shape a decision, policy & regulation, and guide the next steps for energy ventures; he is also a non-resident fellow at the Institute of Americas. Chris has worked in over 40 countries and published extensively over five decades.

Chris has an energy career of over 40 years, living in Mexico (2001–2018), Russia, Vietnam, Mongolia, China & UK. His contributions to the energy and education sectors have been recognised by the UK Government with both an MBE and CBE, and also the Aztec Eagle from the Mexican Government — the first foreigner in the energy sector to achieve this award. Chris' articles for ANZMEX reflect his experience and enthusiasm and are often also later published to a global audience in the USA, UK and Singapore. They are not paid for in any way.

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