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## News release

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# Sin Bin Australia from Commonwealth

Australia is violating the principles of the Commonwealth by refusing to play its part in international efforts to reduce greenhouse gases and should be suspended until it agrees to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, according to a leading analyst.

In his paper to the Earth Charter Conference in Brisbane on Friday, Dr Clive Hamilton, Executive Director of The Australia Institute, says that climate change is expected to have a devastating impact on some of the poorest members of the Commonwealth, yet Australia and Canada in particular have displayed a callous disregard for the future well-being of developing countries.

The Australia Institute has prepared a report saying that climate change is expected to reduce crop yields in Commonwealth developing countries by up to 30% by the middle of the century, with India, Pakistan and a number of African members most severely affected.

In addition, sea-level rise is predicted to put millions of Commonwealth citizens at risk along the coasts of south and east Africa, the Indian sub-continent and Southeast Asia. Small island nations of the Commonwealth are particularly vulnerable, with three at risk of total submersion and major population displacement expected in others.

By the end of the century, membership of the Commonwealth is expected to shrink because some countries will simply disappear.

“When CHOGM convenes near Brisbane next March”, said Dr Hamilton, “Prime Minister John Howard will tell the assembled leaders that the wealthy countries of the Commonwealth have a duty to assist their fellow developing country members. But he will do so in the knowledge that his Government has decided to cut those countries adrift to fend for themselves in a world struggling with climate change.”

The report, *Climate Change and Commonwealth Nations*, says that at no stage in the drawn-out international negotiations over climate change has Australia shown any sympathy for the plight of developing countries, and has tried to shift the costs of solving the problem onto poor countries. Australia has insisted that it will not ratify the Kyoto Protocol until developing countries also adopt emission targets.

Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions are the highest in the industrialised world on a per capita basis, and are more than 20 times higher than those of India.