

Government Conceals Fall in Australia's Greenhouse Emissions

A careful examination of the official greenhouse gas inventory reveals that Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions *fell* by 3.1% between 1990 and 1995, according to Dr Clive Hamilton, Executive Director of The Australia Institute.

The Howard Government has consistently maintained that rapid growth in our greenhouse gas emissions will make it especially difficult for Australia to meet mandatory reduction targets likely to be agreed at the Climate Change Convention in Kyoto in December.

"These official figures directly contradict the Howard Government's claim that Australia would find it impossible to reduce emissions without huge economic costs", said Dr Hamilton.

Compiled by Australia's foremost experts, the new inventory revises earlier work on the contribution of land clearing to Australia's emissions. The fall in emissions arises from a slow down in the rate of land clearing in the 1970s and 1980s.

	1990 Mt	1995 Mt
Net emissions excluding land-use change	379.6	402.4
Net emissions from land-use change	116.2	78.1
TOTAL NET EMISSIONS	495.8	480.5

Source: Environment Australia, *National Greenhouse Gas Inventory 1995* (1997)

"The Government finds these new numbers embarrassing for two reasons", said Dr Hamilton. "They put the lie to its international argument that Australia cannot easily reduce its emissions. And they turn the spotlight on continued land clearing, the bulk of which is in western Queensland and is economically marginal. Ending most of this land clearing would impose a political cost on the Coalition, but zero economic cost on Australia."

Commenting on Mr Howard's 'victory' at CHOGM, Dr Hamilton said: "The CHOGM declaration did nothing more than confirm the Berlin Mandate, which calls for significant reductions in emissions and allows for shared and differentiated responsibilities. Only a Prime Ministerial spin doctor could construe it as a victory".

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