

2 December 2006

## Media release

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# Heatwave highlights Government negligence

Yesterday's scorching temperatures across eastern Australia highlight the bizarre refusal of the Federal Government to take serious measures to combat global warming, according to Australia Institute Executive Director Dr Clive Hamilton.

Last year was the hottest year since records began in Australia in the 1860s and, globally, the last decade has included eight of the hottest years on record. Sharply rising global temperatures are also associated with increases in extreme weather events including heat waves, droughts and hurricanes.

"CSIRO projections indicate that Australian cities can expect a doubling in the number of very hot days in coming decades and drought conditions to become the norm, yet the relentless growth in carbon pollution from burning fossil fuels in Australia has gone unchecked", said Dr Hamilton.

"The Government's own figures show energy sector emissions rising by 45% between 1990 and 2010, with the rate of increase *accelerating* thereafter. This is at a time when other industrialised nations, with the exception of our partner-in-crime the USA, are cutting their emissions."

In addition to experiencing the hottest year on record in Australia, the Bureau of Meteorology has recently reported a 40-year decline in rainfall across southern Australia, with precipitation declining by 25 per cent in some areas. Many dams supplying cities and towns across Australia remain at record low levels.

"Australians have the highest per capita greenhouse gas emissions of any industrialised country and will be the most severely affected by climate change, yet we are global laggards in tackling the problem. Clearly the short-term profits of the fossil fuel companies count for more in Canberra than the long-term health and welfare of ordinary Australians", said Dr Hamilton.

"The Federal Government is playing dice with Australia's future."

Munich Re, one of the world's largest insurance companies, announced last week that economic losses due to weather-related natural disasters set a new record in 2005, reaching more than US\$200 billion.

In November Dr Hamilton announced the formation of a new organisation, the Climate Institute (Australia), designed to pressure Australian governments to face the reality of climate change and take much stronger action to cut carbon pollution. The new Institute is funded by a \$10 million grant from a philanthropic trust.