

MEDIA RELEASE
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Borbidge Holds Key to Meeting Australia's Greenhouse Gas Target

Australia has agreed to sign on to the Kyoto Climate Change Protocol with a target of limiting growth of greenhouse gases to 8% above 1990 levels by the year 2010. Australia has also secured agreement to allow emissions from land-use change to be counted in national emissions.

Returning today from the Kyoto Conference, Institute Executive Director Dr Clive Hamilton said: "This is a black day for Australia's international environmental reputation. By threatening to walk out, the nation with the worst emissions record in the world has been given the most lenient target in the world."

Dr Hamilton said that the effect of this decision would be to require Australia to do almost nothing to reduce its emissions from the energy sector. As a result, while the rest of the world moves into the energy industries of the 21st century Australia will be left behind. "Instead of being part of the energy revolution that the Kyoto protocol will initiate, Australia will be buying new energy technologies from abroad. The world has handed Australia a poisoned chalice", he said

Emissions from land clearing – mostly in Western Queensland – contributed 23% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions in 1990 and 16% in 1995. The fall in emissions was due to a decline in the rates of land clearing in the 1970s and 1980s. As a result, Australia's total emissions from all sources fell by 3.1% between 1990 and 1995.

To meet the new target without more effort in the energy sector will require a rapid phase-out of the majority of land clearing in Queensland. This raises some key issues that the Government has not yet considered:

- How will it phase out land clearing?
- Will compensation be paid to land-owners and lease-holders, and if so who will fund it?
- By strengthening pastoralists' rights, will the Government's Wik legislation make it more difficult to phase out land clearing?
- Will Premier Borbidge endorse restrictions from Canberra on land use in Queensland?

"If the objective of the Australian Government was to protect the short-term position of the coal industry then the Kyoto result has been a resounding victory. If the objective was to see Australia take on its global environmental responsibilities then it has been a disaster", said Dr Hamilton. "In the end it will be a Pyrrhic victory. As the rest of the world stops buying our coal, Australia will become ever more dependent on it."

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