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Australia 'world's worst polluter'

Australia will have by far the highest greenhouse gas emissions per person of any country in the world by 2010, according to a new report analysing the Kyoto climate change agreement released this week by the Australia Institute.

The report, *A Poisoned Chalice: Australia and the Kyoto Protocol*, concludes that the Government's 'victory' will see Australia's per capita emissions from energy consumption and industrial uses rise from 21 tonnes in 1990 to 26 tonnes in 2010, making Australians easily the world's biggest greenhouse gas polluters.

The new report is a stinging attack on the tactics pursued by Australia at Kyoto and claims that the Australian delegation 'tricked' the rest of the world into giving Australia special treatment.

The report is expected to be on the table when the Australian team arrives in Bonn this week for the start of crucial negotiations on the details of the Kyoto Protocol.

The report claims that Australia's negotiating tactics and special concessions have seriously jeopardised future climate change agreements involving developing countries. Developing countries will be reluctant to sign up to targets when a wealthy country with the world's worst emissions record has been given special dispensation to continue to pollute at high levels.

Far from easing an unfair emissions reduction burden, the concessions won by Australia represent a substantial wealth transfer from other developed countries, a fact that will cause international resentment once Australia's true position is understood.

Commenting on the report, Institute Executive Director Dr Clive Hamilton said: "The Government wants congratulations for its budget promise to spend \$180 million over five years on greenhouse gas programs. But this represents the cost of one bus ticket a year for each Australian, a derisory amount for tackling our biggest environmental threat."

The last-minute inclusion of emissions from land clearing at Kyoto gave Australia a huge 'free kick' because land clearing has been declining rapidly since 1990. Dr Hamilton, who was an observer at Kyoto, said: "If they had been aware of the facts, other nations would not have agreed to Australia's demand for an increase in emissions but would have required us to cut our emissions by more than other countries".

The report concludes that if Australia does not want to be left behind in the race to develop and adopt new energy technologies then it must repudiate the Kyoto concessions and adopt a stringent but realistic emission target.

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