

Australian Embarrassment at Greenhouse Growth

A special Australian clause in last November's Kyoto climate change protocol will allow Australia's fossil fuel emissions to increase by 26% rather than the 8% agreed, according to new analysis carried out by the Australia Institute.

The true picture – kept secret by the Australian Government when it won extraordinary concessions in the dying hours of the Kyoto negotiations – will be revealed next week at the Buenos Aires Climate Change Conference in a paper to be presented by Australia Institute Executive Director Dr Clive Hamilton.

Greenhouse gas emissions from Australian industry and transport will be able to increase by up to 26% by 2012 rather than the 8% Kyoto target due to the effects of declining emissions from land clearing in Queensland and NSW.

“The Government has concealed the true position of Australia's emissions by failing to report land clearing emissions in the same way as emissions from energy and other sources. The Australia Institute is for the first time providing a comprehensive picture of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions for the world to see.”

When emissions from land clearing are included, emissions per person in Australia rise from 21 tonnes to around 26 tonnes, making Australians easily the worst greenhouse polluters in the world.

“The Australian delegation is destined for a torrid time at Buenos Aires”, said Dr Hamilton. “After celebrating huge concessions won by Australia at Kyoto, it has now been revealed that Cabinet took a secret decision not to ratify the Protocol until after the USA has done so. This has already attracted international criticism.”

In a recent letter to the Australia Institute the European Union's Environment Commissioner Mrs Ritt Bjerregaard warned that Australia's decision not to ratify could lead to “deadlock” in the international negotiations and that “such a situation would have clearly detrimental effects on the environment and as such would be in contradiction with the objectives of the Convention”. Mrs Bjerregaard urged the Australian Government to live up to its commitments.

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