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News release

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UN pours cold water on Government's greenhouse claims

The latest UN report on the costs of reducing greenhouse gas emissions gives the lie to claims by the Howard Government that meeting our Kyoto targets would be economically crippling.

The just-released report of Working Group III of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says that technological change has been "faster than anticipated" with unexpectedly rapid advances in a wide range of technologies including wind turbines, industrial processes, efficient hybrid engines for cars and fuel cells.

The latest report follows the release last month of the report of Working Group I which said that global temperature is projected to increase by 1.4 to 5.8 degrees C by the end of the century, a rate of warming without precedent for at least 10,000 years, and nearly double the previous estimate of expected warming.

Commenting on the report, the Executive Director of the Australia Institute Dr Clive Hamilton said:

"The UN reports say that climate change is now expected to be worse than previously estimated, but that the costs of cutting emissions will be substantially less than previously thought."

The latest report says that half of the potential emission reductions by 2020 could be achieved at "negative net costs", that is, the benefits from energy saved exceed the capital and other costs. It also emphasises the importance of acting early to make the transition to a "less carbon-emitting economy" so as to minimise the costs of premature retirement of existing capital stock.

"The Government's existing greenhouse programs will go nowhere near meeting our Kyoto target. The 'billion dollars for greenhouse' that the Government brags about is mostly a PR exercise. The rest of the world is taking climate change seriously - Australia should too", said Dr Hamilton.

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