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## News release

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# Australians worst polluters

The position of Australians as the worst greenhouse gas polluters in the industrialised world has deteriorated even further, according to new analysis by the Australia Institute.

Using the latest official data from national reports to the United Nations, since 1995 Australia's emissions per person have risen from 26.7 to 27.6 tonnes while the average for industrialised countries has fallen from 13.6 to 12.9 tonnes. Instead of being around double the average, Australia is now well in excess of twice as high.

Average Australian greenhouse gas emissions are now 30% higher than those of the average American. The largest per capita emitters are Australia (27.6 tonnes), Luxembourg (24.2), Canada (21.9), and the USA (21.1). The average for the European Union is 10.3 tonnes, a figure heavily influenced by its largest members, Germany (11.9), UK (11.4), France (8.2) and Italy (9.0).

"In 1998 Australia's emissions of 518 million tonnes were almost identical to Italy's, yet Australia has one third of the population of Italy", said Institute Executive Director, Dr Clive Hamilton.

"Australia accounts for 3.5% of industrial country emissions", he said. "If one accepted the Government's argument that Australia need not take action because we emit only a relatively small proportion of the world's total, then another 30 of the world's industrialised countries would also be exempted, including Italy with 3.5%, France with 3.3%, Spain with 2.3% and probably Canada with 4.5% and the UK with 4.6%."

The new analysis shows that Australia's emissions are so high because, while our energy emissions per person are a little below those of the USA, we have high levels of emissions from land clearing and agriculture. Emissions from electricity have grown rapidly in recent years, stimulated by the introduction of national competition policy.

"While each Australian is responsible for 27.6 tonnes of greenhouse gases, each Indian is responsible for only about one tonne. Yet the Howard Government has said it will not ratify the Kyoto Protocol until poor countries such as India agree to cut their emissions", said Dr Hamilton. "How fair is that?"

"The Government needs to start taking climate change seriously by ending land clearing and inducing a shift away from the use of coal for electricity generation and replacing it with natural gas and renewable energy."

*The new report may be found under 'What's new' at [www.tai.org.au](http://www.tai.org.au).*