RATIFYING THE KYOTO PROTOCOL

Today I have signed the instrument of ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

This is the first official act of the new Australian Government, demonstrating my Government’s commitment to tackling climate change.

Ratification of the Kyoto Protocol was considered and approved by the first Executive Council meeting of the Government this morning.

The Governor-General has granted his approval for Australia to ratify the Kyoto Protocol at my request.

Under United Nations guidelines, ratification of the Kyoto Protocol enters into force 90 days after the Instrument of Ratification is received by the United Nations.

Australia will become a full member of the Kyoto Protocol before the end of March 2008.

The Kyoto Protocol is considered to be the most far-reaching agreement on environment and sustainable development ever adopted.

Australia’s official declaration today that we will become a member of the Kyoto Protocol is a significant step forward in our country’s efforts to fight climate change domestically – and with the international community.

My Government will do everything in its power to help Australia meet its Kyoto Protocol obligations. This will include:

- Setting a target to reduce emissions by 60 per cent on 2000 levels by 2050.
- Establishing a national emissions trading scheme by 2010.
- Setting a 20 per cent target for renewable energy by 2020 to dramatically expand the use of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind.

I will also lead the Australian delegation at the opening of the High Level Segment of the United Nations conference on climate change in Bali next week.

The conference – which starts today – will set out the “Bali Roadmap” to begin negotiations for the next round of international action against climate change when the first round of targets under the Kyoto Protocol expire in 2012.

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Background on Kyoto ratification

Source: www.unfccc.int

The Kyoto Protocol is a protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Convention was a major step forward in tackling the problem of global warming and was adopted in 1994. Australia ratified the Convention in 1992.

The Kyoto Protocol was adopted at the third Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP 3) in Kyoto, Japan, on 11 December 1997.

The Protocol shares the objective and institutions of the Convention, but while the Convention encouraged developed countries to stabilise emissions, the Protocol commits them to do so. 175 Parties have ratified the Protocol to date. Following ratification by Russia, the Kyoto Protocol entered into force on 16 February 2005.

The Protocol places a heavier burden on developed nations under the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities.” This has two main reasons. Firstly, those countries can more easily pay the cost of cutting emissions. Secondly, developed countries have historically contributed more to the problem by emitting larger amounts of greenhouse gases per person than in developing countries.

Under the Protocol, 36 countries and the EU are required to achieve greenhouse gas emission levels specified for each of them in the treaty. These targets add up to a total cut in greenhouse-gas emissions of at least 5 per cent from 1990 levels in the commitment period 2008-2012.

Australia’s target is to limit the growth in emissions to an 8 per cent increase above 1990 levels over the period from 2008-2012. On Government projections, we are on track to meet the target.

Mr Howard originally claimed the Kyoto Protocol was “a win for the environment and a win for Australian jobs” (ABC AM, Friday 19 Dec, 1997), and then refused to ratify the Protocol and instead undermined international efforts.

The Australian Government today completed the first four of six steps necessary to conclude Australia’s ratification.

1. The Prime Minister signs an Executive Council minute recommending that the Governor approve ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

2. The Executive Council meets to consider the Executive Council Minute and associated Explanatory Memorandum.

3. The Governor General in Council approves ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

4. The Prime Minister signs the Instrument of ratification.

5. The Instrument of ratification is deposited with the United Nations.

6. Ratification enters into force 90 days after the Instrument of Ratification is received by the United Nations.