GOVERNMENT SETS TARGETS FOR REDUCTIONS IN GREENHOUSE GASES

The Minister for Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories, Ros Kelly and the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, John Kerin today announced that the Commonwealth Government has adopted an interim planning target to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by 20% by the year 2005.

The Government will also initiate a National Greenhouse Response Strategy.

"The Government recognises the Greenhouse Effect as one of the major environmental concerns facing the world, and that global action and co-operation are needed to combat it.

"This decision puts Australia at the forefront of international action to reduce emissions of all greenhouse gases. Australia will continue its campaign for an international convention binding all countries to feasible and sustainable greenhouse gas emission reductions," the Ministers said.

"While recognising the need to restrict emissions and to aim for a 20% reduction, the Government will not proceed with measures which have net adverse economic impacts nationally or on Australia's trade competitiveness in the absence of similar action by major greenhouse gas producing countries."

The interim target, based on 1988 levels, will cover all greenhouse gases (eg carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide) not controlled by the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer.

It will complement Australia's existing policy of phasing out CFCs and halons by 1997. These substances are greenhouse gases at the same time as being ozone depletors.

Mrs Kelly and Mr Kerin said the Government will encourage the immediate adoption of emission reduction options such as increased energy efficiency and conservation and new technology.

"We will continue phasing out CFCs, changing energy and transport patterns, and increasing the use of renewable energy, and energy sources which produce fewer emissions," the Ministers said.

More complex options will be addressed in consultation with the Ecologically Sustainable Development working groups and with further cost-benefit studies as required.
The Ecologically Sustainable Development working groups will report to the Government on a range of measures available to achieve interim targets and on the most cost-effective combination needed to achieve those targets.

Australia will continue its campaign for an international convention binding all countries to feasible and sustainable greenhouse gas emission reductions, and it will attempt to gain acceptance of the Toronto target on carbon dioxide and reductions of other greenhouse gases, at the Second World Climate Conference in Geneva.

A referral has also been made to the Industries Commission to prepare a report concerning the costs/benefit implications for Australian industry of an international consensus in favour of a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, including new opportunities that could arise, and how Australia would best prepare itself to respond to those costs and benefits.

The National Greenhouse Response Strategy will include:

* placing greenhouse on the agenda of the Special Premier’s Conference for urgent consideration by the States and Territories.

* Minister Kerin will report back to Cabinet on a range of initiatives that can be implemented immediately to reduce energy demand and emissions using known and available energy efficient technologies and energy management techniques.

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