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Daily printed media, Australian Water Association ("[Promoting the Sustainable Management of Water](#)"),
FarmOnLine, Murray Darling Association ("[For Conservation and Sustainable Development](#)") and various sources
that becomes available. **My comments are in red.**

Compiled by Peter R. Smith OAM

South Australian Murray Darling Association Vice President

Secretary Region 6 Murray Darling Association

Volunteer Climate Change Presenter trained by Al Gore in partnership with the, "Australian Conservation
Foundation"

Phone (08) 8569 2086 Mobile 0418 822 342 Emails: psmithers@lm.net.au & myriver@lm.net.au

For additional information visit www.psmithersmyriver.com

1st

Sunday Mail

2007 Country Football Review

From me - Interesting another side of the drought.

Drought

It is impossible to declare which challenge is the greatest country football. While families on the land are very resilient people – they put up with some terrible conditions and don't grizzle – the influence of the drought is pretty strong. For clubs, the price of water is an issue and to sink a bore at a footy club is a lot of money, so clubs have had to curtail their spending. It affects the quality of our services, which affects the standard of football and increases the potential for injury. It has also forced some families to relocate and once they break those ties with the footy club there isn't necessarily the new blood coming in.

Action on climate 'a moral duty'

Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd has unveiled his blueprint for a National approach to climate change policy, declaring there is a moral responsibility to act now.

Australian

Howard's solutions on climate

The plan by Prime Minister John Howard to commit Australia to a global fund to arrest illegal logging and forest destruction, particularly in developing countries, may well be good conservation.

It certainly is an attempt at effective politics. It does not hit the target, however, on either score.

The Federal Government was late to enter the global warming debate and now clearly is trying to establish environmental credentials of a fashion.

With the federal election perhaps only seven months away, such credentials are under scrutiny as public opinion sharply shifts to greater concern for the future.

The \$200 million forest investment strategy by Australia, to be administered by the World Bank and soon to be embraced by the U.S., Germany and Britain, certainly has potential to be more effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions than the so-called Kyoto protocol.

To realise that, however, would take billions upon billions of dollars. A total of \$200 million over five years is but a drop in the ocean.

The timing of Mr Howard's announcement was impeccable. British economist and climate change expert Sir Nicholas Stern, who last year warned that deforestation was one of the greatest contributors to global warming, was in Canberra.

Mr Howard used his proposal at least as a partial solution and to attempt to cut some of the perceived environmental high ground from under Labor.

Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd has committed a Labor Government to follow Sir Nicholas's suggestion that rich nations should cut emissions by 60 per cent by 2050.

Mr Howard's save-the-world's-forests initiative also is an attempt to weaken persistent criticism by the environmental lobby of Australia's refusal to sign the Kyoto protocol.

The Prime Minister much prefers effective solutions to greenhouse gas emissions, which do not endanger Australian jobs.

Whether the electorate agrees with that is yet to be seen.

What is clear, however, is the Government will not be able to avoid some form of effective domestic policies on greenhouse emissions.

PM steals climate thunder

John Howard has sought to overshadow Labor's climate-change summit to be held in Canberra today by announcing he has put environmental issues on the agenda of September's APEC meeting of world leaders.

Kevin Rudd has revealed he will use today's summit to evoke a Bob Hawke-style call for consensus on environmental change and an end to politicking on the hot-button issue.

The dual push on climate change comes after both sides of politics ran hard on the environment this week: the Prime Minister proposed a \$200million fund to restore the world's forests; Labor increased the availability of \$4000 grants to help people install solar energy panels at home.

As Mr Rudd prepared for his summit, to be attended by business and community leaders, Mr Howard said he wanted APEC to take steps to drive clean development and environmental issues.

Mr Howard's APEC agenda fits with the six-nation Asia-Pacific clean development and climate change pact, signed by Australia, India, Japan, China, South Korea and the US.

He has written to countries including the world's four top energy consumers: the US, Japan, China and Russia. His letter says Australia wants clean development and climate change to be key topics in September and to build on various bilateral projects, such as clean-coal projects between Australia and China, within the APEC framework. APEC members are responsible for 60per cent of the world's energy consumption. Demand for energy in the Asia-Pacific is expected to double in 20 years.

Mr Rudd told The Weekend Australian he had called today's summit because of Mr Howard's failure to act on climate change.

"This is something that our national leadership should have put in place a long time ago because the challenge is so large," he said. "If Bob Hawke was prime minister today, he would have held such a climate change summit years ago."

Mr Rudd said he wanted the summit to begin the process of establishing a national consensus on climate change by utilising the "best and the brightest minds in science and business".

It would consider issues including emissions trading, renewable energy, clean-coal technology and energy efficiency. "This is not a summit where politics will dominate," Mr Rudd said.

It will also see the rare appearance on stage of traditional protagonists: Rio Tinto managing director Charlie Lenegan and Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union secretary Tony Maher.

Greenpeace's representative at the summit, Stephen Campbell, said Labor must "reject false solutions" like clean coal and nuclear power and focus instead on wind and solar power, and energy efficiency.

Australian Conservation Foundation executive director Don Henry said he hoped the summit would provide an opportunity for a broad cross-section of Australians to brainstorm.

"We are all in the same boat together, whether we are environmentalists, business leaders or church leaders, polluting into the same atmosphere," he said.

Herald Sun

Aquifers to store run-off

A plan to collect water in aquifers for re-use has been unveiled by the Bracks Government.

Water Minister John Thwaites also has revealed cheats who flout stage 3a water bans, active from today, face fines of more than \$500.

Melburnians can water gardens only in the mornings twice a week -- between 6am and 8am manually and from midnight until 2am with automatic dripper systems.

Even-numbered homes can water on Saturdays and Tuesdays, odds on Sundays and Wednesdays.

There are no changes to the stage 3 restrictions for car washing, industry, sportsgrounds, pools and spas.

Mr Thwaites said the aquifer storage and recovery project would begin this winter. It would see 10 million litres of run-off stored in a natural aquifer under Rosedale Golf Course, Edithvale. The project was backed by a \$490,000 Government grant.

He said the Government would encourage other organisations, developers and industries to look at aquifers for collecting stormwater for non-drinking uses.

Mr Thwaites said a scheme requiring new housing developments to install an additional pipe to run recycled water from nearby treatment plants to all homes -- in place in the outer east -- would be expanded to the Craigieburn and Werribee growth corridors.

He said research into the viability of mining recycled water from sewers was making progress.

News.com

Climate doomsayers all at sea

Around 18,000 years ago, what is now Sydney Harbour was about 15km inshore of the coastline, and the sea level was at its lowest point, about 120m below the present sea level.

The site of the Opera House, on Bennelong Point, was almost midway between the beach and Homebush, and South Head was midway between the Opera House and the coast.

According to the Australian Museum, the sea reached its present level about 6000 years ago.

So, the sea level rose one metre every 100 years from its low point to the current level during that period.

Not evenly, on a couple of occasions the sea rose several metres in very short periods - over a few decades. At other times, things stalled. But the worst-case scenario posed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which now has the worry warts twisting their knickers so anxiously, has sea level rising about 0.3m per 100 years, about a third of the rise known to have occurred in the relatively recent past.

And they blame it all on Man! **From me, not all!**

There is an old joke about the smartest invention in the world, and one fellow says he believes it is the thermos flask because in winter it keeps hot food hot and in summer it keeps cold drinks cold. "Now, how does it know that?" he asks. Well, how do the experts know that Man is responsible for the current changes in climate?

Answer: they don't. They're guessing, **(yes scientific information guessing)** and they are dressing up their guesses with computer modelling which is so unreliable that it can't even predict with any great success what the weather will be next year.

It's a jolly good thing there were no computer modellers around to scare the pants off the Sydney locals (had they been wearing pants) 16,000 years ago, and warn them to stop cooking their fish and goannas over carbon-emitting campfires, to throw away their fire sticks and eat their possum raw and like it.

As for the pollution caused by the so-called science of fire-stick farming, forget it! Those bushfires every year must have sent the CO2 levels rocketing.

Or wasn't global warming responsible for the rising sea levels?

If it wasn't, what was? And why were the sea levels sinking the beachside suburbs of the period three times faster than anything we face today ?

It is easy to be afraid listening to Al Gore, Nicholas Stern and Tim Flannery, but it is difficult not to be concerned once their theories are questioned.

The IPCC has long predicted that climate change was going to bring about more violent weather events than we have experienced, but that ignores the record in both hemispheres.

In our neighbourhood, however, the IPCC is quite specific. It says Australia will be hit by more frequent and intense heatwaves, bushfires, floods, drought and landslides as global warming sends temperatures soaring this century. Oh yeah? Temperatures in the southern hemisphere haven't altered in 25 years and, according to the records, the global temperature has been stationary since 1998.

What the scaremongers don't explain is that the temperature is measured on the Earth's surface, by balloons rising through the atmosphere and from satellites which look at particular molecular structures as they circle the globe. The purest of these is the satellite measurement because it is least affected by incidental events, but all of the above show that southern hemisphere temperatures haven't altered significantly over the past 25 years, despite the computer modelling which shows that the less polluted hemisphere should have become warmer than the northern hemisphere, which is shielded by particulate matter.

In fact, the compilers of the most recent IPCC report had to slash estimates of global temperature rises by nearly one third. Sane scientists, who are not chasing the climate-change dollar, joke that if this trend continues, the IPCC will be predicting another ice age within 10 years. Whoops! There were scientists pandering to the market for gloom and doom 30 years ago who were predicting a coming ice age. Lesson: hang on to that heavy overcoat.

The Great Barrier Reef is also under threat, and even though the greatest damage done in recent times was caused by an inundation of fresh water from a cloud burst, this dire warning ignores the reality that corals have lived in warmer seas than we now have, and overlooks the fact that they adjust. OK, the fossil coral outcrops metres above sea level didn't make the cut but, then again, the Great Barrier Reef was once a plain with no coral at all.

Those running around with their petticoats pulled firmly over their heads don't want to know that the Romans grew wine grapes in Britain, that Greenland got its name because it used to be warm enough for farmers, or that the Earth's climate has always been changeable.

But they claim to have science on their side. Then so, too, did all those who thought Y2K - the Millennium Bug - was going to wipe out civilisation as we know it. There is a debate to be had, but it serves no one if those promoting fear are resorting to pseudo-science and questionable modelling to make their case.

Man is not the villain in global warmin, says Piers Akerman. Maybe Piers Akerman is partly correct but can we afford to ignore the science? Whatever the answer we can not sit back, TO DO NOTHING IS NOT AN OPTION!

2nd

FarmOnLine

Unnatural WA weather to be investigated

Research is being stepped up into the causes and magnitude of climate change in Western Australia, after a new report has shown temperature increases and winter rainfall decline in the State's southwest are unlikely to be due to natural climate variability alone.

According to the Indian Ocean Climate Initiative - a partnership of the WA Government, CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology - the region's climate is likely to continue to become warmer and drier over coming decades due to the increase in greenhouse gases.

CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research scientist, Dr Bryson Bates, says there is increased confidence in how the climate of south-west WA will change due to increasing greenhouse gas concentrations, but that the IOCI team will now do further work to understand climate change across the whole of the state.

"The next phase of IOCI will be a much bigger research effort than ever before," Dr Bates says.

"Following the great strides forward we have made in understanding the climate of the south-west, we will now investigate other aspects of the West Australian climate, particularly in the economically important north-west.

"We need to improve our understanding of the contribution to climate change in the region from factors such as the Asian Brown Cloud, and improve our understanding of tropical cyclones in the north-west."

The IOCI research team has already used climate projections from nine climate models to understand how climate may change in the southwest.

"Our results show that by 2030 there would be a rise in temperatures in all seasons and a decrease in winter rainfall," he says.

"Rainfall may decline by as much as 20pc relative to the 1960-1990 level, with the number of winter rain days decreasing by up to 17pc, and runoff in south-west WA catchments consequently decreasing by between 5pc and 40pc.

"By about 2085, these changes may further increase, with rainfall declining by between 5pc and 34pc, and the number of winter rain days decreasing by up to 30pc."

Dr Pandora Hope, from the Bureau of Meteorology Research Centre, says the IOCI's results also provide increased confidence in the causes of recent past climate changes in southwest Western Australia.

"The sudden decline in south-west Western Australian early winter rainfall that occurred in the 1970s, and has continued since, is occurring because the potential for storm development over this region has decreased due to much weaker winds in the upper atmosphere," Dr Hope says.

"In the next phase we will investigate how much of this change might be explained by natural variations in the climate or if this is a consequence of human activity." SOURCE: *Farm Weekly*, WA's leading rural newspaper, posting updates daily on *FarmOnline*.

AgForce secures drought help for far west Qld

Strong lobbying by AgForce has helped secure vital Federal drought assistance for a large section of far western Queensland.

AgForce drought coordinator, Rod Saal, says more than 200 graziers as well as small business people in the Boulia Shire and previously undeclared parts of the Longreach and Winton shires, now have access to drought Exceptional Circumstances assistance until June 2009.

"AgForce helped organise a tour of the region in February with the National Rural Advisory Committee which then recommended Federal Minister for Agriculture Peter McGauran hand down an EC declaration," Mr Saal said.

"Graziers in this region have been overlooked for assistance for years despite on-going drought conditions seriously depleting stock numbers and cash reserves."

Mr Saal says today's declaration will help the entire community.

"It's not just landholders who can access Federal assistance thanks to this drought declaration," he said.

"While producers can access measures such as EC relief payments through Centrelink and interest rate subsidies via QRAA, recent extensions to drought assistance mean some small businesses within towns in EC declared areas can also get help."

SOURCE: *Queensland Country Life*, weekly rural newspaper, updated daily on *FarmOnline*.

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Fast, easy climate remedies 'ignored'

Australia's climate change debate is becoming a contest between rival mega-projects, while both major parties fail to move on simple measures to drive the cheapest and fastest cuts to greenhouse gas emissions through efficiency improvements and reducing demand.

Energy experts challenged Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd to make energy efficiency a priority in Labor's greenhouse platform in the lead-up to this year's federal election at the national climate change summit in Canberra on Saturday.

Former Greenpeace International chief executive Paul Gilding said there was growing frustration at the Howard Government and now Labor for building their climate change policy response around long-term charismatic mega-projects with 40-year targets like clean-coal technology and nuclear power.

"It's easy for politicians to make statements about the long term because they don't require much policy action or affect voters now," he told *The Australian* yesterday.

"Earlier cuts from energy efficiency will make a big difference compared to later cuts. But there is no policy I see from Labor or the Coalition that addresses this seriously."

Mr Gilding said Mr Rudd was in danger of falling into the trap of promoting a suite of "left-wing mega-projects", such as increased subsidies for renewable energy and developing a green-car industry, to compete with rival announcements by the Howard Government.

Research by global consultants McKinsey has shown the first 5 per cent of cuts in greenhouse emissions could come from a suite of efficiency measures - including insulation, retrofitting office buildings and improving fuel efficiency in transport - that would deliver a net profit for the economy.

Sustainable Solutions director Alan Pears told the Labor summit the value of these kinds of efficiency gains and investment had been wrongly discounted by energy economists.

"The dry economists who have dominated energy policy have been energy-efficiency sceptics," he told the summit.

"They have seen it as a marginal, minor issue because their economic models are not well suited to modelling dramatic change in the productivity of energy. Australian business has actually taken its eye off the ball in terms of energy efficiency because we are obsessed with energy-market reform to reduce energy prices. A lot of us pay more for energy now because we are less efficient."

Although Labor and the Coalition have acknowledged the importance of energy efficiency, there has been few formal policy initiatives. In February, the Howard Government announced a ban on incandescent light bulbs, while some Labor states have provided rebates and incentives for low-energy hot water systems.

Australian.

Climate experts set to issue grim warning

The world's top climate scientists are gathering in Brussels today to hammer out the summary of a massive report that predicts dire consequences from global warming, especially for poor nations and species diversity.

Even if dramatic measures are taken to reduce the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions that drive warming, temperatures will continue to climb for decades to come, the experts conclude.

By 2080, according to the report, it is likely that 1.1 to 3.2 billion people worldwide will experience water scarcity, 200 million to 600 million will be threatened by hunger, and each year an additional two million to seven million will be victims of coastal flooding. The brunt of these problems will fall squarely on to the world's poorest inhabitants, who are least to blame for the fossil-fuel pollution that drives global warming.

According to a final draft of the 1,400-page report obtained by AFP, hundreds of millions of people living in more than three dozen deltas - including the Nile in Egypt, the Red River in Vietnam and the Ganges-Brahmaputra in Bangladesh - are likely to find themselves wedged between rising sea levels and more frequent flooding.

Tropical diseases are likely to spread as well.

The impact will be all the more devastating because most of these countries lack the money and skills to adapt to the threat.

Indeed, if global temperatures rise no more than 2 degrees Celsius compared to 1990s levels, northern Europe and North America may even enjoy higher crop yields, milder winters and expanding forests.

The report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) will be unveiled on Friday after its members have approved a roughly 50-page summary for policymakers.

It assesses the past and future impact of rising temperatures on the planet's physical and eco-systems and inhabitants. It also evaluates the capacity to adapt to the predicted changes.

In February, the IPCC issued a first volume of its review with an assessment of the scientific evidence for global warming. It predicted temperatures would probably rise between 1.8 to 4.0 degrees Celsius by century's end. A final volume, due to be released in early May, will discuss how warming can be mitigated.

Besides the impact on human society, climate change will also have far-reaching consequences for the planet's biodiversity, the Brussels report will say.

It predicts that 20 to 30 per cent of species will be threatened with extinction if temperatures rise 1.5 to 2.5 degrees Celsius, on the lower side of end-of-century forecasts.

If temperatures rise by 4 degrees Celsius "few ecosystems will be able to adapt," says the report

Compiled to help governments make policy choices, the report will probably sharpen debate on a range of global-warming issues.

"The developing countries will certainly point out the huge gap between regions, and make it known that they need help," said a Western delegate involved in the drafting.

"This is true even if the IPCC's role is to make a diagnosis, not to address questions of financing."

Policymakers may also be divided on how much money should go to adaptation and how much toward mitigation, even if experts have made it clear that both are essential.

Climate change to hit poor hardest

Equatorial lands that are home to hundreds of millions of people will become uninhabitable as food and water run out due to climate change, scientists will warn this week.

A report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, due to be published on Friday, will warn that the temperature rises of 2-3C predicted by 2050 spell global disaster for humanity and the environment.

The report will underline the growing divide between rich and poor nations on the issue. The world's richest countries, which have contributed by far the most to the atmospheric changes linked to global warming, are already spending billions of dollars to limit their risks from its worst consequences.

But despite commitments to help poor countries deal with the warming, the industrial powers are spending far less on ways to limit the damage in vulnerable and poor equatorial countries.

The report will say that up to 40 per cent of animal and plant species face extinction as rising temperatures destroy the ecosystems that support them. And it will point out that the 29 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide poured into the atmosphere each year are acidifying the oceans - threatening to destroy coral reefs, plankton and commercial fish species.

By the middle of the century, more than 200 million people could have been forced from their native lands by rising sea levels, floods and droughts as the world heats up, with many more facing early death from the resulting malnutrition and heat stress.

"The picture that emerges from the research is quite appalling," said Rachel Warren, of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, one of the IPCC's senior authors.

"It is just horrendous realising what damage climate change can do to ecosystems."

The IPCC report is a collation of the best peer-reviewed scientific research into the impact of climate change published over the past five years. It will say that many of the worst effects on humans will be caused by water - or lack of it - in the form of floods, drought, melting glaciers, rising sea levels and ocean acidification.

Nearly a third of the world's land surface may be at risk of extreme drought by 2099, compared with about 1 per cent today. Such a change would destroy farmland and water resources and lead to mass migrations of environmental refugees. The IPCC will also warn that the Amazon rainforest could be in danger.

Diana Liverman, director of the Environmental Change Institute at Oxford University, said the region was already experiencing an alarming reduction in rain. "The warming of the oceans seems to be changing the water cycle," she said. In lands close to the Equator, especially in Africa, declining crop yields could leave hundreds of millions of people unable to grow food. *The Sunday Times*

“All the hallmarks of a multi-year disaster with the potential to cause extreme damage to the economy, the environment and social well-being” Crisis could cost \$23bn

A high level report prepared for the State Government shows the water shortage is far more critical than authorities have revealed and threatens to cost South Australia up to \$23 billion. **Surprise! Surprise!**

Lift price ‘to force’ users to save water

South Australians should be paying eight times more for each kilolitre of water to force people to save water, an Adelaide scientist says.

Wentworth Group of concerned scientists member and university of Adelaide Professor Mike Young said the price of water should sky-rocket in drought conditions to as much as \$4/kilolitre.

In the long term, SA should be permanently on a “scarcity” system, which give households a base amount of 100kL a house each year and charge at least \$2/kL for water used beyond that point.

3rd

AWA

The head of the Bureau of Meteorology, Geoff Love, has urged the Federal Government to make good on its promise to overhaul inefficient arrangements to monitor water resources by dedicating \$480m to establish a National Water Database as proposed under the Government's \$10 billion water plan, regardless of whether all the states sign on.

NSW Premier, Morris Iemma, has selected his new Ministry, including newly elected Phil Koperberg as Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water and Nathan Rees as Minister for Water Utilities. Verity Firth is Minister Assisting the Minister for Climate Change.

Victorian Drinking Water Quality Report for 2005-2006 is now available and 193 water quality incidents reported over the year, just one resulted in minor illness, related to an overdose of aluminium. Victoria has developed a competency based auditor certification scheme to support a risk management plan audit process.

Well over \$27m annual sales of products carrying the Smart Approved Watermark has been reported in a recent survey. Since the SAWM was launched in 2004, over 75 products and services that save water outside the home have been approved. These include a web-based Plant Selector for choosing the right plants for different soils of the Sydney region.

While two SE Queensland water projects face budget blowouts, the Queensland Water Commission reports that most projects are on schedule and big businesses have more than doubled their water savings over the past year.

Irrigators have agreed to sell 100 GL of low-security water to the NSW Government in the state's biggest buyback for environmental flows in a \$20m deal with Murray Irrigators Ltd, taking over nearly half of its supplementary water licence to recharge key environmental systems.

H2O Today radio: AWA President David Barnes lists challenges for the water industry: Shane Jones (Netafim) covers innovative water drip-lines for commercial applications; ADS Environmental Services discusses leakage; Steve Posselt says his planned paddle from Brisbane to Adelaide down the Murray is about global warming. Perth residents would pay higher water bills if it meant avoiding water restrictions.

At a critical time of worsening drought, dwindling water resources and debate and action about climate change, Conservation Volunteers Australia in partnership with BHP Billiton has announced Revive Our Wetlands, Australia's largest national wetlands revival program, will continue for a new three-year term 2007 to 2009.

Queensland Fair Trading Minister Keech has condemned the tactics of door-to-door sellers exploiting concerns about Recycled Water to make a fast buck. Traders appear to be selling water purifiers and pressuring homeowners into buying their products by giving residents false information about recycled water.

Energy distributor Energex is set to start on substation upgrades and the installation of a new sub-transmission electricity cable for the operation of the Gold Coast Desalination plant at Tugun. Work is starting on stage one of a two-stage process to install underground power cables between Energex's Burleigh substation in Kortum Drive and the new plant.

The Guidance Paper for the terms of the regular review of Water Pricing by Victoria's Essential services Commission has been uploaded to the ESC website.

Victoria's Water Minister Thwaites has urged the Federal Government to provide \$90m in funding for the Goldfields Superpipe, following first delivery of pipes for the \$180m Ballarat leg of the pipeline, which is vital for ensuring a reliable water supply for the area.

Veolia Water has won two contracts to build and operate new RO Desalination plants in SPAIN (D&C and 15 yr O&M) and OMAN (BOO and 22 yr Ops).

To clarify last week's news item, Clearwater Technology's Aquacell Water Recycling System will soon be installed in the K2 Sustainable Housing development in Melbourne. This system will recycle water from 96 units, making it available for toilet flushing and irrigation.

As Sydney ponders a \$2 billion desalination plant, many Aboriginal communities in NSW still do not have access to clean drinking water or sanitation.

Melbourne's big water users will be able to trade water under the first Australian proposal to establish an urban water trading market.

MDA

Making Water From Thin Air

A company that developed technology capable of creating water out of thin air nearly anywhere in the world is now under contract to nourish U.S. soldiers serving in Iraq.

The water-harvesting technology was originally the brainchild of the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which sought ways to ensure sustainable water supplies for U.S. combat troops deployed in arid regions like Iraq.

"The program focused on creating water from the atmosphere using low-energy systems that could reduce the overall logistics burden for deployed forces and provide potable water within the reach of the war fighter any place, any time," said Darpa spokeswoman Jan Walker.

To achieve this end, [Darpa](#) gave millions to research companies like LexCarb and Sciperio to create a contraption that could capture water in the Mesopotamian desert. But it was another company, Aqua Sciences, that developed a product on its own and was first to put a product on the market that can operate in harsh climates.

"People have been trying to figure out how to do this for years, and we just came out of left field in response to Darpa," said Abe Sher, chief executive officer of Aqua Sciences.

"The atmosphere is a river full of water, even in the desert. It won't work absolutely everywhere, but it works virtually everywhere."

Sher said he is "not at liberty" to disclose details of the government contracts, except that Aqua Sciences won two highly competitive bids with "some very sophisticated companies."

He also declined to comment on how the technology actually works. "This is our secret sauce," Sher said. "Like Kentucky Fried Chicken, it tastes good, but we won't tell you what's in it." He did, however, provide a hint: Think of rice used in saltshakers that acts as a magnet to extract water and keeps salt from clumping.

"We figured out how to tap it in a very unique and proprietary way," Sher said. "We figured out how to mimic nature, using natural salt to extract water and act as a natural decontamination. "Think of the Dead Sea, where nothing grows around it because the salt dehydrates everything. It's kind of like that."

The 20-foot machine can churn out 600 gallons of water a day without using or producing toxic materials and byproducts. The machine was displayed on Capitol Hill last week where a half-dozen lawmakers and some staffers stopped by for a drink.

"It was very interesting to see the technology in action and learn about its possible implementation in natural disasters," said Rep. E. Clay Shaw Jr., a Republican from Florida whose hurricane-prone district includes Fort Lauderdale. "It was delicious," Shaw said.

Jason Rowe, chief of staff to Rep. Tom Feeney, another Florida Republican, called the technology "pretty impressive."

"I was pretty blown away by the things it's able to do," Rowe said. "The fact that this technology is not tied to humidity like others are makes it an attractive alternative for military bases in the Mideast where humidity is not really an option.

"It seems like it's a cheaper alternative to trucking in bottled water, which has a shelf life," said Rowe, who described himself as a fiscal hawk.

Once deployed, the machines could reduce the cost of logistical support for supplying water to the troops in Iraq by billions of dollars, said Stuart Roy, spokesman of the DCI Group, Aqua Sciences' public affairs firm.

The cost to transport water by C-17 cargo planes, then truck it to the troops, runs \$30 a gallon. The cost, including the machines from Aqua Sciences, will be reduced to 30 cents a gallon, Roy said.

Several systems on the market can create water through condensation, but the process requires a high level of humidity.

Aqua Sciences' machines only require 14 percent humidity, Roy said. "That's why this technology is superior and why they are getting the contracts."

Australia

Vic Govt reconsiders irrigators Mokoan plan

Irrigators from Victoria's Broken Valley, who have been campaigning to retain part of Lake Mokoan for irrigation storage, have had a major breakthrough following a meeting with Water Minister John Thwaites on Friday.

Key to the breakthrough is their proposal to include a permanent wetland on the site.

The Justice for the Broken Valley group were granted the impromptu meeting after using Friday's official opening of the Tungamah pipeline by Mr Thwaites to protest over the State Government's refusal to listen to community-backed plans for the shallow lake north of Benalla, which is slated for decommissioning by 2009.

Group chairman, David Rush, says the minister has agreed to give the proposal his utmost consideration.

He has also undertaken to come back to them within a fortnight as to whether the Government would honour an undertaking given by Department of Sustainability and Environment water chief, David Downie, that they would be given access to Goulburn Murray Water flow modellers to allow them to test figures contained in their proposal.

"This is a great breakthrough for us and if we can see the Government analysis we are confident our figures will stack up," he said.

The Government has announced plans to decommission the lake, which is estimated to lose 48,000ML a year in evaporation, and use the 35,000ML water saved by returning it to wetland, and a further 9000ML from efficiency gains, to boost environmental flows in the Murray and Snowy rivers.

But irrigators fear decommissioning will jeopardise their water security and claim their plans for a mini 89,000ML storage on the Winton Swamp could deliver the same savings, their desired 97pc water security and additional high-security regulatory flows for the lower Murray for no extra cost.

SOURCE: A full report on the issue will appear in the April 4 issue of *Stock & Land*, Victoria's weekly rural newspaper..

New Independent challenger for Cobb in Calare

Former Telstra Countrywide Western NSW general manager, Gavin Priestley, will run as an Independent for the new Calare electorate at the next Federal election.

The announcement follows last week's news the current member for Calare, Peter Andren, will resign his post to contest a seat in the Senate.

Mr Priestley will stand against the current Nationals Member for Parkes, John Cobb, who will instead run as a candidate for Calare, following a savage change to regional electoral boundaries for this election.

Mr Priestley says his aim is to keep Calare independent and follow the example of Mr Andren to deliver strong representation to the Central West area.

"I believe my extensive knowledge of the western area, its people, local Government, and its mining, farming and business communities, qualifies me to represent the greatly expanded Calare in Canberra," Mr Priestley said.

Mr Priestley will establish a campaign office in Calare this week, and has pledged to drive and fly to every corner of the expanded electorate in the months running into the election.

Meanwhile, Mr Cobb won unopposed The Nationals' pre-selection on the weekend, clearing the way for him to run for the seat of Calare.

Party Leader Mark Vaile said Mr Cobb's pre-selection was a vote of confidence from the grassroots of the State's largest political party organisation.

"John will continue to represent his current electorate of Parkes, 80pc of which will be redistributed into the seat of Calare at the next election," Mr Vaile said.

"Whether in agri-politics as the popular and effective President of the NSW Farmers Association or since his successful entry into politics, John Cobb has continued to be the genuine voice of Western NSW.

"I know that John Cobb will continue to champion important infrastructure investment in roads and the inland railway, while also working hard to ensure better health services in local communities."

SOURCE: Rural Press National News Bureau, Parliament House, Canberra.

News.com.au

Bush beaten on global warming

In a stinging defeat for the Bush administration, the Supreme Court has ruled that US environmental officials have the power to regulate greenhouse gas emissions that spur global warming.

By a 5-4 vote, the nation's highest court told the US Environmental Protection Agency to reconsider its refusal to regulate carbon dioxide and other emissions from new cars and trucks that contribute to climate change.

The high court ruled that such greenhouse gases from motor vehicles fall within the law's definition of an air pollutant.

The ruling in one of the most important environmental cases to reach the Supreme Court marked the first high court decision in a case involving global warming.

President George W. Bush has opposed mandatory controls on greenhouse gases as harmful to the US economy, and the administration instead has called for voluntary programs.

In 2003, the EPA refused to regulate the emissions, saying it lacked the power to do so. Even if it had the power, the EPA said it would be unwise to do it and would impair Mr Bush's ability to negotiate with developing nations to cut emissions.

The states and environmental groups that brought the lawsuit hailed the ruling.

"As a result of today's landmark ruling, EPA can no longer hide behind the fiction that it lacks any regulatory authority to address the problem of global warming," Massachusetts Attorney-General Martha Coakley said.

Greenhouse gases occur naturally and also are emitted by cars, trucks and factories into the atmosphere. They can trap heat close to Earth's surface like the glass walls of a greenhouse.

Steep rise

Such emissions have risen steeply in the past century and many scientists see a connection between the rise, an increase in global average temperatures and a related increase in extreme weather, wildfires, melting glaciers and other damage to the environment.

Democrats in Congress predicted the ruling could add pressure on politicians to push forward with first-ever caps on carbon dioxide emissions. The United States is the world's biggest emitter of such gases.

The ruling also could make it easier for California and 13 other states to put in place mandatory emission caps, officials in that state said.

Writing for the court majority, Justice John Paul Stevens said the EPA's decision in 2003 was "arbitrary, capricious or otherwise not in accordance with law".

In sending the case back for further proceedings, Justice Stevens said the EPA could avoid regulation only if it determined that the gases do not contribute to climate change or if it provided a reasonable explanation.

Justice Stevens said the EPA could not avoid its legal obligation by noting the scientific uncertainty surrounding some features of climate change and concluding it would be better not to regulate at this time.

White House spokeswoman Dana Perino said of the ruling, "We're going to have to take a look and analyse it and see where we go from there."

The EPA said the administration was committed to reducing greenhouse gases and it was "reviewing the court's decision to determine the appropriate course of action."

The court's four most conservative members - Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito, both Bush appointees, and Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas - dissented.

They said the environmental groups and the states lacked the legal right to bring the lawsuit in the first place.

EU official lays into 'negative' Australia

THE EU has laid into the US and Australia, the only two major industrialised countries to reject the Kyoto Protocol, as UN scientists prepared a report likely to issue grim warnings about climate change.

European Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas pointedly characterised the US as "number one emitter" of fossil-fuel pollution in the world.

"Its own approach doesn't help in reaching international agreement," Mr Dimas said as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) meeting got underway.

Mr Dimas upbraided Australia, accusing it of having "a negative attitude on international negotiations" and of rejecting the UN's emissions-cutting pact on the grounds of politics rather than economics.

"I can really not understand why Australia has not ratified Kyoto. If you ratify Kyoto it will cost you one third of what it costs you now... it's purely political."

Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt said at the opening that "unpopular measures are unavoidable" to avoid wrenching damage to Earth's climate system.

"It's up to the politicians – all politicians of all countries – to take those measures, because you can't let this happen."

The 400-member IPCC is to issue a 1400-page report on Friday on the impacts of climate change, along with a key "summary for policymakers".

It will list the shifts that have been seen in Earth's climate system in the past decades as a result of global warming and make predictions about further changes this century. The report is the second in a three-volume update of knowledge about climate change under the IPCC, which gathers top minds in climate science, biodiversity, economics and other fields.

The IPCC was set up in 1988 with the task of providing neutral, objective information about global warming and its effects.

The Kyoto Protocol is the only international agreement to set a target of reducing carbon pollution – mainly the by-product of burning fossil fuels – that drives global warming.

But the treaty has been almost crippled by the absence of the US, which abandoned the treaty in March 2001 in one of US President George W. Bush's first acts in office.

Mr Bush said the US commitments under Kyoto, to which his predecessor Bill Clinton had agreed, were too costly for the US economy.

He also said the accord was unfair, as only industrialised countries – and not fast-growing large developing countries such as China and India – are required to make targeted emissions cuts.

Australia has followed the US in refusing to ratify Kyoto and is similarly pushing for bilateral, regional and technical co-operation for tackling climate change.

Kyoto's supporters have long suspected that this approach aims at weakening support for the treaty, whose renegotiation is coming up.

Groundwater source drying up, state told

An underground aquifer that supplies more than half of Perth's drinking water and much of the city's irrigation is drying up after years of overuse.

The West Australian Environmental Protection Authority has accused the state Government of failing to heed years of warnings.

A damning EPA report released yesterday says the amount of water being drawn from the Gnangara groundwater mound north of Perth is unsustainable.

The aquifer supplies up to 60 per cent of Perth's drinking water, irrigation for horticulture, agriculture and parks and thousands of garden bores.

EPA chairman Wally Cox said local wetlands were drying out, soil was acidifying and some species had died as Gnangara's water levels continued to drop.

He said urgent action was needed to reduce pressure on the aquifer, which has had years of reduced rainfall, unsustainable water allocations and the impact of thousands of hectares of pine plantations draining water from the mound.

Water Resources Minister John Kobelke conceded the aquifer was drying but denied the Government was ignoring it. He blamed global warming and said \$7.5 million was committed this week to develop a new sustainability strategy for the area.

"The situation is getting worse and action continues to be deferred," the report says, in the third EPA warning in three years.

But Mr Kobelke said a number of options were being investigated, including recharging the aquifer with treated wastewater and burning off natural bushland to cut water intake.

He said the large government pine plantations that cover parts of the mound might also have to be cleared. The plantation timber is worth millions of dollars.

Concern is rising over government plans to tap another major underground water source to top up Perth's water supplies. More than 700 people rallied outside parliament last week to protest against the move to take an extra 45GL a year from the Yarragadee aquifer in the south of the state, saying it was not sustainable.

Liberal environment spokesman Steve Thomas said it would be "catastrophic" if the Government began extracting water from Yarragadee when it could not manage Gnangara.

Howard hits back at EU over climate

John Howard today told the European Union to look in its own backyard instead of criticising Australia's stance on greenhouse gas emissions.

The EU's chief environmental official blasted the US and Australia for refusing to join other industrialised nations in ratifying the Kyoto Protocol.

EU Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said Australia had "a negative attitude on international negotiations" and had rejected the UN's emissions-cutting pact on political rather than economic grounds.

"I can really not understand why Australia has not ratified Kyoto," Mr Dimas said.

"If you ratify Kyoto it will cost you one-third of what it costs you now ... it's purely political."

The Prime Minister said Australia was doing better in meeting emissions targets than many EU members.

"You've got the spokesman for a group of countries lecturing us about not having signed Kyoto yet the great bulk of the countries on whose behalf he speaks are falling well behind their Kyoto targets and are doing less well in meeting them," Mr Howard told ABC Radio today.

"Our answer to spokesman for the European Union is look to your own affairs, get your countries complying with the targets you have proclaimed."

Mr Howard said Europe's climate change policies would not work for Australia.

“The economies of Europe, which are not resource intensive, do not have the fossil fuels, do not have the uranium reserves and everything that we have.

“(They) are very different to the Australian economy and we would be doing our country a lot of damage if we applied European solutions to a completely different Australian situation.”

Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd said ratifying the Kyoto Protocol would involve Australia in talks about the post-Kyoto regime beyond 2012.

“That will critically influence the way in which coal and carbon based fuels are traded in the future and we need to be at that negotiating table and the way to be at that negotiating table is by ratifying Kyoto,” Mr Rudd told reporters.

Labor environment spokesman Peter Garrett said the EU had clear emission reduction targets for 2020 and while some members needed to catch up there was a consensus to reach its goals.

“Cherry-picking the individual progress of countries does not in any way take from the urgent necessity for Australia to set emission targets itself,” Mr Garrett said.

Meanwhile, the Business Council of Australia today put its weight behind a national scheme in emissions trading which can be linked to an international system.

The BCA proposes a scheme at least 30 years long which sets annual and long-term reduction targets, issues tradeable permits and has a first phase of collecting data and setting up measurement and verification mechanisms.

BCA president Michael Chaney said the business community had reached a broad consensus on moving from a high to low global emissions economy.

“Now, it is up to our political leaders and policy makers to use this consensus to deliver a framework for action, including realistic targets and transition arrangements to make sure the Australian economy is not adversely affected,” Mr Chaney said.

Expert opinion: Green Leader Backs Nuke power

Renowned environmentalist and scientist James Lovelock has advocated nuclear power for Australia and bluntly told Labor its opposition “no longer makes sense and that the risks and dangers of nuclear power were ‘wildly exaggerated’ during the Cold War for good reasons, that this no longer applies and the dangers of global heating are seriously greater than that of even nuclear war”.

Seawater plant gets go-ahead

Construction of a pilot desalination plant system will begin almost immediately after the State Government announced it had approved the project.

4th

FarmOnLine

ATSE calls for tougher water management

The National Water Initiative (NWI)– and its scrutiny by the National Water Commission (NWC) – needs strengthening to achieve national water reform, according to the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE).

This is a key call by ATSE in its submission to the NWC’s first biennial review of the NWI.

ATSE’s submission says, “Our national history is one of many state and a few Commonwealth water initiatives, many of which have tried to deal with water as if it were a discrete element of a catchment or the environment.

“This has led to:

- Failed initiatives
- Poor planning and management of catchments and their resources
- Very substantial public costs and
- Extensive community and primary industry confusion and cynicism.

“Accordingly, there is a need to strengthen those requirements in the NWI which favour integrated catchment planning and management.

ATSE’s submission says water planning and management is difficult and there are few, if any, significant ‘win-win’ situations left.

ATSE also identifies institutional blockages as an obstacle to achieving major reform.

“Throughout the nation there are hierarchies of town and regional planning, land, water, vegetation and estuarine management, as well as agency and local government arrangements to deal with a vista of water-related issues, many of which have been left in place over decades.

“The NWI should provide for state and territorial reviews of institutional arrangements that impact on water management reforms,” ATSE says. ATSE also calls for the NWI to get a better grip on stakeholder involvement.

“Successful catchment and water management requires a clear understanding by the various social partners of their respective roles.

“It is frequently difficult for lay people to see the need for system-wide responses to local problems or to bridge the many difficulties in interpreting available data, of variable quality and applicability.

“Those in government often fail to appreciate the same need as they strive to simplify, cut through and achieve a politically satisfactory outcome in the allowed time frame.

“There would be considerable benefit in clarifying and recognising the various roles of the stakeholders in a revised NWI, thereby reducing the risk that NWI initiatives will be compromised or fail to meet expectations during implementation,” ATSE suggests.

NEWS.com.au

Carbon tax a 'simple solution' to cut emissions

Commission says carbon tax a simple solution

Report notes "disjointed" approach to climate policy

A major government advisory body said today a carbon tax could be introduced as a first step in cutting greenhouse emissions in Australia.

"Due to its administrative simplicity, a tax has some merit as a transitional tool and could be introduced in a revenue neutral way," the Productivity Commission said in a submission to the Prime Minister's task force on emissions trading.

Prime Minister John Howard has opposed the introduction of a tax to curb emissions and instead left the door open to a national trading scheme.

The commission says either method could be effective in pricing greenhouse gases but that a tax would be easier to introduce.

If a national trading scheme was introduced instead, the commission said the price should be constrained until an international market is in place.

The agency said it was in Australia's interest to be part of an international effort to cut greenhouse gases (GHG) by lobbying for emission caps in all major industrial countries.

"Independent action by Australia to reduce GHG emissions, in itself, would deliver barely discernible climate benefits, but could be nationally very costly," it said.

Commission chairman Gary Banks said: "Given the comparatively high costs of achieving abatement in Australia and our minor contribution to the global problem, any national policy initiative needs to be calibrated to the prospect and nature of an international response."

The commission said a unified approach to combating climate change was vital.

"Climate change policy in Australia is a disjointed, fragmented patchwork of measures across sectors and jurisdictions," the summary said.

"A national approach should be based on GHG pricing - through an emissions tax or an emissions trading scheme." The Prime Ministerial Task Group in Emissions Trading in February sought submissions ahead of making its final report in May.

The Business Council of Australia yesterday backed a national emissions market in its response to the taskforce. couriermail.com.au

Water cheats may be cut off

People using excessive amounts of water will be forced to explain the reason amid threats of heavy fines or having their supply cut off.

The crackdown comes as the Queensland Water Commission is due to reveal today a relaxation of proposed level 5 water restrictions.

The finalised level 5 restrictions, which will apply from next Tuesday, will allow people and businesses to water their gardens with buckets three times a week in the evenings, rather than the earlier proposal of only two times a week early in the morning.

Under a tough new regime also to be announced by the commission today, households using more than 800 litres of town water a day – about one in 10 of all households across the region – will have to fill out forms detailing their water use.

Householders who fail to comply with the forms and who are found by councils to be in breach of the level 5 water restrictions will then be slapped with a fine and a ban on all outdoor water use.

Water authorities and councils are discussing a range of fines beginning at \$5000 for a first breach.

People who do fill out the forms will receive advice from the commission about how to cut their water use.

However, if the offending residents do not reduce their water consumption by the end of August they, too, will face the possibility of hefty fines.

The Water Commission and southeast Queensland councils are also discussing a range of measures beyond fines to punish recalcitrant high water users, including reducing or cutting off completely the supply of water to individual properties.

Water plan still 'too risky' for Vics

Federal Water Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, has again failed to win over Victorian farmers to the Federal Government's \$10 billion water plan.

They left a meeting with the Minister on Tuesday still questioning how the plan would impact on the State's irrigators.

Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) water chairman, Richard Anderson, said he had ongoing reservations about the scale of the powers the Federal Government wanted handed over.

"I don't think we are any closer to signing," he said.

"If anything, I left the meeting less convinced than I was before.

"It is too open ended.

"The way I understand it, the Federal government wants the State Government to confer all their powers, even those of Goulburn Murray Water (GMW), and the Federal Government will just give us back what they don't want.

"Where does that leave us?

"If they take over GMW, they get all the seasonal allocation and there is a real risk there, that we would have to share the water with South Australia and New South Wales with no recognition of our hard work."

One of irrigators' key concerns has been maintaining their water property rights.

But Mr Anderson said if the state lost control of allocations, water entitlements would be largely irrelevant.

"You might have 100pc property rights, but if they have control of seasonal allocation and you only get 50pc allocation, property rights won't mean anything.

"It is a little too risky."

The VFF had earlier indicated that, as Victoria has a 43pc share of water in the Murray Darling Basin, its irrigators should at least receive an equivalent share of the funding if they were to hand over powers.

Mr Anderson said Mr Turnbull had warned on Tuesday that irrigators could miss out on funding altogether if Victoria did not sign the agreement.

"But we're spending \$400m a year in Victoria anyway."

Mr Anderson is due to meet Mr Turnbull again on Thursday.

He said he had reservations about whether the Federal authorities were capable of managing the complex Murray Darling Basin system and felt an adaptation of the existing system might be a better solution.

"We have a vehicle in the Murray Darling Commission with independent commissioners who are not answerable to the individual states," he said. "There is a framework there.

"So we may be able to work within the current agreement." SOURCE: Extract from report in *Stock & Land*, Vic, April 5.

Warrego water sale "wrong": Cobb

The Queensland Government's decision to auction off 8000 megalitres of water licences on the Warrego River is wrong and should not happen, according to the Federal Government's assistant water minister, John Cobb.

Despite the water auction getting the thumbs up from Prime Minister, John Howard, last week, Mr Cobb believes in the current water climate, the concept of handing out more water licences, particularly in an unregulated area such as the Warrego, is not a good one. Mr Cobb said the Prime Minister was in a "no win" situation because the 8000ML on offer was part of the water-sharing plan for that region of Queensland.

However it was his view that the Warrego is about "as unregulated as you're ever going to find" and he was very concerned about an increase in irrigation there.

"You can't predict it," Mr Cobb said.

It was a river that was probably no different from the Paroo, Mr Cobb said, which has cross-border agreement in place banning irrigation.

"From our point of view we couldn't pick the Queensland plan to pieces, and say 'yes you can have one thing, but not another'," Mr Cobb said.

"We had to accept the work that had been done.

"But I personally think Queensland should not sell that water.

"It's not so much the 8000 megs, but it's the principle attached to it and at a time like this, I think Queensland probably should not sell that."

Mr Cobb said the issue had upset floodplain graziers most "and it's not hard to see why".

There is considerable nervousness in the cross border catchments between Queensland and NSW, about the security and future of irrigation once the CSIRO hands down its audit report on water availability and over-allocation hot spots, with some alleging the outcome will be pre-determined by politicians or environmentalists with an agenda to wind back irrigation in Queensland.

Mr Cobb said farmers needed to know the CSIRO audit on the water availability in the basin, was being done by the head of the water department, and was not influenced by hydrologist, Peter Cullen, or other members of the Wentworth Group.

He said contrary to some reports, there was also "no way" Liberal Senator, Bill Heffernan would, or could, have any involvement in the outcome of the CSIRO report.

Mr Cobb did signal, though, where he thought the beneficiaries of the new plan for water reside.

"I totally understand where the floodplain graziers are coming from, and for graziers, this situation can only get better, not worse."

SOURCE: Rural Press National News Service, Parliament House Bureau, Canberra.

Adelaidenow.com

Global warming could destroy Great Barrier Reef

The world's most spectacular natural wonders, ranging from Australia's Great Barrier Reef to the Amazon River basin, are threatened by the ravages of global warming, the green group WWF said today.

It singled out 10 micro-regions across the globe where climate change has already taken a toll, warning that these delicately-balanced ecosystems are, in many cases, in danger of disappearing outright.

More on Climate Change

"While adaptation to changing climate can save some, only drastic action by governments to reduce emissions" of greenhouse gases can stop the "complete destruction" of others, said WWF scientist Lara Hansen.

Up to 60 per cent of the Amazon forest, home to nearly a third of the planet's land species, could become semi-arid savanna if average global temperatures rise 2-3C above 1990 levels, the WWF said.

It is very likely that some species will become extinct even before they are identified.

The WWF report comes a day before the world's top climate scientists in Brussels release a large report, the second of three, predicting dire consequences from global warming, especially for poor nations and species diversity.

"There is high confidence that climate change will result in extinction of many species and reduction in the diversity of ecosystems," says the 1400-page final draft report, a copy of which was obtained by AFP.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's first report, released in February, forecast temperatures would rise between 1.8-4C by century's end. A final volume, due to be released in early May, will discuss how warming can be mitigated.

Australia's Great Barrier Reef along with other reef ecosystems - which take up only a quarter of a per cent of ocean floor surfaces but sustain 25 per cent of all marine life - are rapidly declining, the WWF warned.

The IPCC report says that an increase of only 2C will result in the bleaching of the world's reefs, with catastrophic consequences for species diversity and local economies that depend on them.

The world's largest remaining mangrove forest, located in the Bay of Bengal where the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers converge in Bangladesh, is also on the WWF's list of climate change "hotspots".

Like other low-lying mega-deltas, this one - home to the endangered Bengal tiger - is threatened by rising sea levels and increasingly violent monsoons and rainstorms.

Other sites on the list include the Caribbean home to the critically endangered Hawksbill turtle; Mexico's Chihuahua Desert, North America's largest; and the Valdivian rain forests in Chile and Argentina, sole habitat of the Fitzroya, also called the alerce, a South American pine whose lifespan can exceed 3000 years.

The WWF also sound the alarm for the Upper Yangtze River region, one of only two native habitats for the panda; the Bering Sea, which supports huge populations of fish, shellfish, birds and marine mammals; and the coastal forests and marine eco-regions of East Africa.

Greenhouse gases are invisible gases that trap heat from the sun, causing atmospheric temperatures to rise and eventually heating up the oceans and land.

Man-made emissions come from the burning of fossil fuels - coal, gas and oil - that are the backbone of today's energy supplies and by land use in agriculture and forestry.

There are also natural sources of these gases, but those emissions are discounted by scientists as the driver for today's deeply troubling rise in global temperatures.

Reef in top 10 most threatened

Great Barrier Reef in top 10 most threatened list

List includes Amazon, Himalayas, Yantzee River

WWF says 97 per cent of reef could be lost by 2050

THE Great Barrier Reef rates alongside the Amazon, Himalayan glaciers and China's upper Yangtze River as 10 natural wonders around the globe facing a bleak future if climate change action is not taken soon.

A report by the conservation group WWF warns the 10 "micro-regions" are already affected by climate change, and comes as the world's top scientists in Brussels prepare to release a report which further highlights the consequences of global warming, especially for poor nations and species diversity.

WWF marine spokesman Richard Leck said if global emissions were not addressed, 97 per cent of Queensland's Great Barrier Reef could be lost in repetitive annual bleachings by 2050, devastating the environment and the multi-billion dollar tourist industry.

"Essentially what we're saying is there's a certain amount of warming locked in which will result in more frequent and probably more severe bleaching events into the future," Mr Leck said.

"Australia cannot expect other nations to help save the reef."

Emission targets outlined

The report recommends the Federal Government set emission targets which will peak and fall by 2010.

The targets would be below 20 to 30 per cent of 1990 levels by 2020 and 60 to 80 per cent below by 2050.

Nutrient, mud and chemical pollution run-off from farming the area was also identified in the report.

WWF's Australian water program leader Nick Heath said money was needed to improve farming practices and purchase environmentally sensitive land back that should be removed from farming to re-establish wetlands.

"The reef has survived for thousands of years, yet this generation of Australians risk losing it due to the twin threats of climate change and land-based pollution," Mr Heath said.

A spokeswoman for Federal Environment and Water Resources Minister Malcolm Turnbull said Mr Turnbull was travelling and unavailable for comment on the findings and recommendations of the report.

Fauna and flora threatened

Up to 60 per cent of the Amazon forest, included on the list and home to nearly a third of the planet's land species, could become semi-arid savanna if average global temperatures rise 2-3C above 1990 levels, the WWF said. It is very likely that some species will become extinct even before they are identified.

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5th

Advertiser

Expanded Olympic Dam to cut Emissions

GREEN MINE

Nearly one fifth of the energy used in the expanded Olympic Dam mine operation will be free of greenhouse gas emissions, under a plan by BHP.

PM rejects Treasury water policy attach

Prime Minister John Howard has rejected stinging criticism from one of the Government's most senior bureaucrats over the spending of \$10 billion for the Murray Darling Basin and adequacy of measures to address climate change.

Global warming fuels a bleak picture

For people in their thirties, climate change already has reshaped the World in which they were born.

By the time they reach retirement age, the changes will be far more dramatic – and perhaps life threatening on a massive scale.

6th

FarmOnLine

Hopes high as SA waits for the big break

The March rains have given many farmers across South Australia renewed confidence and optimism as the State heads into winter.

The Eyre Peninsula and North West received significant falls with Whyalla topping the State at 74.8 millimetres for the month and Ceduna on the West Coast receiving 74.4mm.

In the North East 25mm fell at Gluepot, while Yongala in the Upper North had 31.4mm and in the Mid North, Clare received 61.6mm, Port Pirie 62.2mm while 39.2mm fell at Snowtown.

The Yorke Peninsula town of Minlaton had 29mm while in the Adelaide Hills, Mount Barker received 30.6mm and Renmark in the Murray Mallee had 27.8mm, with 34.7mm falling at Karoonda for the month.

Unfortunately, the South East did not fare so well with most towns receiving less-than-average rain, with Mount Gambier receiving 20.4mm.

"Most of the rain that fell across South Australia during March was the result of a significant inflow of tropical moisture that occurred last weekend," Weatherzone meteorologist, Matt Pearce, said.

"This brought a widespread rain band to western and northern parts of the State.

"Unfortunately, it largely bypassed the south east corner."

Mr Pearce says near-normal rainfall is likely in SA through the rest of autumn, and at this stage SA farmers can expect above normal rainfall through winter – an expected results of the breakdown of the El Nino and an increase in northwest cloud bands.

Sustainable Agricultural Systems senior consultant, Tom Yeatman, said the good rains through March gave farmers good confidence for the season ahead.

Also, farmers should be congratulated on the amount of cover in paddocks across most of the State.

"The condition of the country is on par with a normal year," he said.

Producers should concentrate on maintaining good cover and stability of soil to prevent potential wind or water erosion.

"The latest rain gave farmers the opportunity to plant cereals for fodder," he said.

"Also, the rain gave rise to a good emergence of medics and sub-clovers, and there is every possibility this will continue through into the season, and provide excellent early growth and feed for stock."

But weed germination - because of the rain - will need to be controlled.

"With most areas looking to sow in early May it is imperative to control green growth throughout April to prevent the build up of diseases, in particular rhizoctonia and take-all," Mr Yeatman said.

If croppers sow cereals too early, with any sort of winter, it will lead to a large amount of crop growth and a very high probability - in spring - of leaf diseases such as rust in wheat and barley and scald in barley.

Manoora farmer, Allen Kelly, Glen Holme, says his 46mm on March 19, added to 80mm in January, provided four weeks of good green feed, saving on fodder for his 1400 Merinos and Dohnes and 90 Simmental-Murray Grey cows and calves.

Mr Kelly says he will seed lower-risk crops - more cereals but no beans or canola, and will stick with peas and pasture legumes.

McGauran not convinced on soil carbon option

Federal Minister for Agriculture, Peter McGauran, said he still needs expert and scientific advice on whether soil could be used as a carbon sink and be part of an emissions trading scheme.

With pressure on the government to begin discussing areas where agriculture can be part of any future emissions trading schemes, Mr McGauran appears to have some doubts about one of the options most favoured by the industry.

Mr McGauran questioned how soil could be translated into a measured carbon sink.

"What's been a success for farmers is that no tillage or minimum tillage has meant a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, but as to whether or not it then becomes a net absorber of greenhouse gas gases is another thing," Mr McGauran said.

"I don't pretend to be an expert," he said.

Having recently announced up to \$5 million funding to help farmers prepare for the risks associated with climate change, Mr McGauran said he would "definitely" like to see some of that money explore the challenges, options and benefits associated with the soil carbon theory.

"At the moment we've got a bit of a simplistic approach to the climate change debate within agriculture in the broader community, which is largely centred on preventing land clearing and you reduce Australia's overall greenhouse gas emissions levels.

"On the other hand, plant trees and you can absorb greenhouse gases, and therefore agriculture has a crucial role to play.

"We do need to broaden it out to other aspects of agriculture, such as usage of fertilisers, treatment of soils, and see where agriculture can carve out a net benefit to itself, not just the nation."

Mr McGauran said projects under the \$5 million rural climate change initiative would focus on both adaption to climate change as well as the reduction of greenhouse emissions.

"We of course have to adapt to climate change, and for most farmers that's of crucial importance, but at the same time we want to play a role in the greenhouse gas debate.

"The fact that Australia over the last decade has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions level by 40 per cent is largely, if not entirely due to agriculture.

"New constraints on land clearing have helped the nation because we have a better than average world rate of reduction of greenhouse, but the burden has fallen on agriculture has been economically born by a number of individual farmers who can no longer clear land."

SOURCE: Rural Press National News Service, Parliament House Bureau, Canberra.

NFF finally reveals climate-trading position

The National Farmers Federation has finally revealed its position on an emissions trading scheme in response to tackling climate change in a new report to be handed to government this week.

Among key recommendations to the government, the NFF supports a national emissions trading scheme to be implemented as soon as possible in its response to the Prime Minister's emission trading taskforce's draft discussion paper, released in February.

NFF cautions, though, that any trading schemes developed do not undermine or impact on Australia's agricultural competitiveness and requests repeatedly that farmers be totally involved and consulted in the climate and carbon debate.

NFF acting chief executive officer, Denita Wawn, said the Prime Minister's taskforce draft paper was "the first real opportunity" for NFF to seriously consider the issue of an emissions trading scheme.

"The Prime Minister's Taskforce enabled us to develop a strong set of guiding principles to inform the debate," Mrs Wawn said.

"It's critical, given the impact of and on agriculture in the emissions issue that the agricultural sector is consulted in all areas of the debate."

The paper says NFF supports the government's action to limit man-made gas emissions, but wants "complete and continuing recognition" of the role Australian agriculture has already played in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

"The value of the greenhouse emissions abatement achieved through bans of land clearing would, if tradable, be in excess of \$500 million annually based on the price of emissions under the NSW Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme," the NFF report said.

"Affected farmers have received virtually no recognition of this over the decade that these bans have been in place, despite it being almost the sole reason that Australian greenhouse emissions are within range of targets agreed to during international negotiations over the Kyoto Protocol, a point acknowledged in the Issues Paper published by the Prime Ministerial Task Group."

The NFF report says to date the Federal Government's actions on climate change had been "piecemeal, of questionable effectiveness, economically inefficient, and have given little consideration to questions of equity".

"NFF believes that Australian farmers can make a further significant contribution to reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, but to achieve this will require the development of a range of incentive-driven, well-designed policies and strategies that provide new opportunities for farmers to both increase productivity and contribute to greenhouse emission reductions," it said.

The report said NFF was strongly opposed to a carbon emissions tax.

Mrs Wawn said she was disappointed there was a view held by some that agriculture was dominated by climate change sceptics.

"In fact agriculture has a strong history on environmental management and actually responds to climate changes on a daily basis."

She said this report was an approach looking at the issue from the impact on agriculture perspective.

Mrs Wawn said NFF would like to see a considerable focus on research efforts to reduce greenhouse emissions.

SOURCE: Rural Press National News Service, Parliament House Bureau, Canberra.

Australian

US, China halt major climate report

Publication of key UN climate change report delayed

Delay due to countries protesting against certain text

Report says planet fast-tracked to mass die-out

PUBLICATION of a key UN scientific report on the impacts of global warming has been delayed due to US, China and Saudi Arabia objecting to its tough-worded text.

The objections sparked a protest that politicians were meddling in the scientific assessment about climate change.

"This is the first time that the science is being questioned by politicians," an angry delegate said.

The report had been due to be issued at 0800 GMT (1800 AEST) today by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as part of its first review in six years of the evidence for man-made climate change.

The main document is a "summary for policy makers" about the known effects of climate change and a prediction of these impacts for the 21st century.

Countries object to warnings

The US, China and Saudi Arabia lodged objections to sections of text and graphics that gave high-level warnings about these effects. "The Europeans want to send a strong signal. The US does not want as much quantification," a delegate said.. China had sought to remove some passages from the summary asserting that climate change had already had negative effects around the globe, arguing that the data in the 1400-word main study was not solid enough to be included in the key policy document, the delegate said. Saudi Arabia also held up progress by objecting to the juxtaposition of a table showing the progressive consequences of warming as temperatures increase with another table showing the benefits of reducing the emission of carbon dioxide.

Report forecasts:

With a few exceptions, the reports forecasts, obtained by the media, are relentlessly bad for virtually all of Earth's population, but poor tropical countries - the least to blame for the fossil-fuel pollution that drives global warming - will be worst hit.

Worsening water shortages in thirsty countries, malnutrition caused by desiccated fields, property damage from extreme weather events and the spread of disease by mosquitoes and other vectors will amount to a punishing bill that is beyond the ability of vulnerable countries, especially in Africa, to pay.

Biodiversity and natural habitat are reportedly in for a hammering.

Even a modest increase in temperatures will bleach many coral reefs, reduce part of eastern Amazonia to a parched savannah, thaw swathes of the northern hemisphere's permafrost, change seasons for plant pollination and animal reproduction.

Mass die-out on the cards

The planet could be placed on the fast track to a mass die-out.

"Roughly 20-30 percent ... of species assessed so far are likely to be at increasingly high risk of extinction if global mean temperatures exceed 2-3C above pre-industrial levels," the scientists are expected to say.

"By 2080, it is likely that 1.1 to 3.2 billion people will be experiencing water scarcity," said a draft of the summary, explaining that the figure depends on world population growth, energy use and the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. *With AFP and Reuters*

Grim extinction forecast, report warns

Nearly one-third of the world's plants and animals will face extinction by 2030 if the average global temperature rises by as little as 1.5C.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is expected to release this worrisome prediction tonight as part of its assessment of the impact of climate change on the natural world.

The push to extinction would come in response to major ecosystem changes that would shrink or eliminate critical habitat for vulnerable species.

In Australia, highly adaptable species such as cane toads, cockroaches and some kangaroo species would probably cope, Andy Pitman, a climate scientist with the University of New South Wales in Sydney, said.

"But species that lack tolerance to climate like some small possums and koalas - the cute ones - would not (survive)," said Professor Pitman.

Along with colleagues at UNSW's Climate Change Research Centre, Professor Pitman is doing ecosystem modelling to determine more precisely which plants and animals are at risk and when the changing climate would push them to extinction.

The IPCC report, "Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability", is the second volume of the panel's Fourth Assessment of globalwarming.

More than 2500 scientists contributed to the findings, including 15 lead authors from Australia.

Mars in global warming debate

Climate change sceptics have seized on news that Mars is heating up to back their claim that humans are not causing Earthly global warming.

The research comes from US planetary scientists, who suggest the Red Planet warmed by about 0.65C from the 1970s to the 1990s, similar to Earth's 0.6C average temperature rise during the 20th century.

"It could be coincidental or it might be the needle in the haystack," said climatologist William Kininmonth, former head of the National Climate Centre in Melbourne.

"It's an interesting observation, as it's the same time period as Earth's temperature has been warming."

Mr Kininmonth said the research, published in the journal *Nature*, showed there was enough natural climate variability to account for global warming on Earth.

Not so, claimed Neville Nicholls, a climate scientist at Monash University in Melbourne.

"The paper is interesting but it hasn't got anything to do with the question of human impact on global warming on Earth," Dr Nicholls said.

"It's not an excuse to argue that humans are not causing global warming on Earth."

The research was done by a team led by Lori Fenton of the NASA Ames Research Centre at Moffett Field, California.

They used a computer model based on those devised to study global warming on Earth, adding Martian features such as a cold, airless surface and a shifting south polar ice cap while subtracting Earth's oceans and atmosphere.

Dr Fenton's group found that annual variation in the solar radiation reflected from the surface of Mars -- its "albedo" -- contributed to the warming by causing more blowing dust.

Over the past 30 years, the dust swept clean large swathes of the planet's surface, reducing reflected radiation.

The result was a "positive feedback loop" between dust, wind, albedo and temperature.

"It's a nice piece of work," said UNSW climate scientist Andy Pitman. "But there are no implications for Earth."

Professor Pitman was lead author of the climate modelling section of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report released in February.

Professor Pitman disputed Associate Professor Franks's claim that changes in Earth's albedo had a bigger influence on climate than greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide.

"Albedo is included in climate models," Professor Pitman said. "It can have a local effect but cannot explain the observed warming record."

The Nature paper comes on the eve of the second report from the fourth IPCC review, set to be released tomorrow night.

Mini tax on carbon to prepare for future

A very low tax on carbon emissions - less than \$5 a tonne or \$70 a year per person - could give Australia a start in preparing for an eventual global emissions trading system without harming present economic performance.

The plan, mooted in government ranks, has been given extra weight by a report for the Productivity Commission suggesting that a revenue-neutral impost could help prepare Australian business for any global trading scheme developed in the coming decade.

Business believes such a plan could work, preferably as part of a "cap and trade" system, if the money raised was spent on low-emissions or alternative-energy research, development and deployment.

A previous federal environment minister had proposed a \$4- to \$5-a-tonne charge on carbon emissions and The Australian understands such a figure is still being debated.

Activists who want Australia to take a leading role in changing polluting behaviour say a price of between \$12 and \$25 a tonne on the nation's 500million tonne-plus emissions a year is required.

John Howard has previously ruled out a direct tax on carbon and last night played down the proposal.

He said through a spokesman his Government would not embrace an approach to climate change that would damage industries, such as mining, that employed millions of Australians.

In its submission to the Prime Minister's Task Group on Emissions Trading, the Productivity Commission warns Australia may pay a heavy price if it were to commit to any system before the rest of the world.

The commission, a semi-independent adviser to government on micro-economic matters, says although there is evidence humans are affecting the environment, "uncertainty continues to pervade the science and geopolitics and, notwithstanding the Stern review, the economics".

Independent action by Australia would deliver "barely discernible climate benefits, but could be nationally very costly".

The nation could, however, consider a transition arrangement, such as a modest tax on carbon, that would act as a learning phase for industry and the community on what paying for carbon emissions might be like.

Any proposal should be revenue neutral, meaning a government might offset the money raised by reducing corporate tax rates or removing environmental regulations.

The commission argues that taxes are established instruments in economies and would have low administration costs. Minerals Council of Australia chief executive Mitchell Hooke warned yesterday that although Australia should not embark on unilateral action, there was scope for "unilateral leadership".

"I don't want a blunt economic instrument of a carbon tax," he said. "I would see that kind of low order price as being part of a cap and trade framework."

Mr Hooke also questioned the value of long-term targets, saying they were either inaccurate, out of touch with what was achievable, or prone to manipulation.

Kevin Rudd has proposed a 60 per cent cut in emissions by 2050, an idea accepted in principle by the Business Council of Australia.

Mr Hooke said the corruption of the European trading market - where too many permits were given out, causing the price to crash - was a salutary lesson for any nation seeking to create an emission scheme.

"If we do another Kyoto Protocol, where we pluck targets out of the air and adopt some economic trade agreement that has got Europe written all over it, then we will be defeating what we are trying to do," he told the National Press Club.

"What we are really trying to do is get to a stabilisation platform of atmospheric concentrations and then relate those targets back to what we want to actually do.

"Because, if that target is willy-nilly, and they are too tough, they will drive economies into the ground.

If they are too loose they will get a European emissions trading scheme that will put too much liquidity into the market and you will defeat the purpose of the exercise."

As the level of the River Murray drops (especially between Lock 1 {Blanchtown} and the Murray Mouth) many ferries services have placed load limits on what the ferries can usually carry and others will need extensions so as to be able to continue to operate.

7th

Advertiser

Sand replenishment to double in 20 years

Rising sea levels will double the annual cost of sand replenishment on Adelaide's beaches in 20 years, a climate change report has found.

Lake level the worst in years.

Lake Alexandrina is at its lowest level for more than a decade, prompting calls for the State Government to rule out construction of a weir near Wellington.

The latest Murray-Darling Basin Commission weekly report shows the lake is 0.19m above sea level – less than one-third of its full supply of 0.75m.

Fishermen say the last time the lake level dipped below 0.2m was in 1967.

However, the the State Government said it was the lowest level since 1994.

news.com.au

Billions face climate risk

UN panel issues starkest warning yet

Poorest to suffer climate effects

US continues to resist policy change

UN climate experts issued their starkest warning yet about the impact of global warming, ranging from hunger in Africa to a fast thaw in the Himalayas, in a report overnight aimed at increasing pressure on governments to act. More than 100 nations in the UN climate panel agreed a final text after all-night talks during which some scientists accused governments of watering down conclusions that climate change was already under way and damaging nature.

The report said warming, widely blamed on human emissions of greenhouse gases from burning fossil fuels, would cause desertification, droughts and rising seas and would hit hard in the tropics, from sub-Saharan Africa to Pacific islands.

"It's the poorest of the poor in the world, and this includes poor people even in prosperous societies, who are going to be the worst hit," said Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

"This does become a global responsibility in my view," he said.

The IPCC groups 2500 scientists and is the world authority on climate change, and has said all regions of the planet would suffer from a sharp warming. Its findings are approved unanimously by governments and will guide policy on issues such as extending the UN's Kyoto Protocol, the main UN plan for capping greenhouse gas emissions, beyond 2012.

But in Washington the Bush administration indicated the United States still planned to tackle limiting carbon dioxide emissions on its own rather than support global mandatory caps.

"Each nation sort of defines their regulatory objectives in different ways to achieve the greenhouse reduction outcome that they seek," Jim Connaughton, chairman of the White House council on environmental quality, said. But a senior Democratic lawmaker said the report was further evidence that the US had to act quickly on global warming.

"This Congress must rise to the challenge of transitioning from energy sources that threaten the planet and preparing for the damage we can no longer avoid," said Rep. Edward Markey, who heads a special committee on energy independence and global warming in the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives.

The study said climate change could cause hunger for millions with a sharp fall in crop yields in Africa. It could also rapidly thaw Himalayan glaciers that feed rivers from India to China and bring heatwaves for Europe and North America.

"This further underlines both how urgent it is to reach global agreement on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and how important it is for us all to adapt to the climate change that is already under way," said European Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas.

"The urgency of this report...should be matched with an equally urgent response by governments," said Hans Verolme of the WWF conservation group.

Scientists said China, Russia and Saudi Arabia raised most objections overnight and sought to tone down the findings, including those about the likely pace of extinctions.

22.

Other participants said the United States, which cited high costs when it pulled out of Kyoto, had opposed a suggested text that said parts of North America could suffer "severe economic damage" from climate change.

China, the second largest source of greenhouse gases after the United States, insisted on cutting a reference to "very high confidence" that climate change was already affecting "many natural systems, on all continents and in some oceans".

But delegates sharpened other sections, including adding a warning that some African nations might have to spend 5 to 10 per cent of gross domestic product on adapting to climate change. Overall, the report was the strongest UN assessment yet of the threat of climate change, predicting water shortages that could affect billions of people and a rise in ocean levels that could go on for centuries. Its review of the regional impact of change built on an IPCC report in February saying that human greenhouse gas emissions were more than 90 per cent sure to have stoked recent warming.

Oceans to blame for weather, says expert

Natural changes in ocean currents are to blame for increased Atlantic hurricane activity in recent years, not man-made global warming as many scientists believe, hurricane forecaster William Gray said overnight.

"I think the whole human-induced greenhouse gas thing is a red herring," Gray said in a speech at the National Hurricane Conference. Mr Gray, whose annual forecasts for the hurricane season are closely watched, said the Earth has warmed the past 30 years, but that it was due to fluctuations in ocean currents. He predicted a cooling off period would begin in five to 10 years as the currents change again.

"I see climate change as due to the ocean circulation pattern. I see this as a major cause of climate change," Gray told the meteorologists and emergency management specialist who attend the annual conference.

The Atlantic had destructive hurricane seasons in 2004, when four major hurricanes struck Florida, and 2005 when Katrina and Rita badly damaged the US Gulf Coast.

In 2005, there were a record 28 named storms and 15 hurricanes, but last year was much calmer with 10 tropical storms and five hurricanes. This year, Mr Gray's forecasting team is predicting an active season with 17 named storms, nine of which will become hurricanes.

Periods of intense Atlantic hurricane activity are not unusual and follow the change of a key Atlantic Ocean current that shifts every 30 years or so to bring warmer ocean waters that encourage hurricane formation, Mr Gray said.

He said carbon dioxide levels in the Earth's atmosphere have increased, but periods of hurricane activity preceded the build-up of the gas, which is blamed for warming and is the byproduct mostly of fossil fuel burning.

The changing ocean current "goes back for hundreds of thousands of years," Mr Gray said. "These are natural processes. We shouldn't blame them on humans and CO2."

Mr Gray said the Atlantic current appears to change because of a rise and fall in water salinity.

The combative professor dismissed the work of scientific colleagues who have linked global warming and increased hurricane activity, saying they were simply seeking grant money.

"You've heard a lot of foolishness over the last few years," said Mr Gray.

8th

news.com.au

Debt-hit families sink further

Battling families are using their credit cards to pay their mortgages in last ditch efforts to save their homes.

The *Sunday Herald Sun* has learned of one Ringwood family that has accumulated \$160,000 in debt on eight credit cards.

And charities and financial counsellors say there are thousands more - many just one interest rate rise from losing their homes.

They say using a credit card to pay the home loan is postponing the inevitable.

The short-term fix inevitably comes unstuck when high interest rate credit runs dry.

Credit card users pay exorbitant interest of 20 per cent or more for cash advances.

Standard variable mortgage rates average about 8 per cent.

In January, credit card holders withdrew \$1.035 billion in cash, according to the latest Reserve Bank figures.

Finance counsellors report a growing list of borrowers seeking advice on how to save their homes.

They urged struggling borrowers to address immediately their financial problems before it was too late.

Carolyn Bond, of the Consumer Action Law Centre, said she understood that Supreme Court claims for property repossession climbed to almost 2800 last year - double what it was four years ago.

"And that's just the tip of the iceberg," she said. "People who see the writing on the wall sell before it reaches the Supreme Court. "An increasing number of people facing foreclosure are coming to our office."

Another likely interest rate rise will compound problems for over-stretched borrowers.

Finance counsellor Jan Pentland told of a family seeking help recently with credit card debts of about \$100,000 on top of a \$400,000 mortgage.

23.

About \$40,000 was owed on one card, with \$60,000 outstanding on the other nine cards.

Ms Pentland said financial institutions eager to approve new credit cards and increase limits had contributed to the family's crippling debt.

Sunday Mail

Don't panic on climate

Warning on 'extreme' predictions

The Federal government has urged caution in the face of a dire UN report on climate change which predicts the beginning of the end of the Great Barrier Reef along with koalas and possums within 13 years.

Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull, in Washington to sell Australia's plans to help end global deforestation, said people should be wary of embracing the "extreme" end of climate change projections contained in the latest assessment by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

From me, "Yes, Mr Turnbull, 'to do nothing is not an option' & "Plan for the worst hope for the best."

This is the World we want to leave for not our generation or the next generation but next future generations, we must step back and try to predict what is needed now for the.

"Ensuring the Path we walk only leaves Footprints not Scars" E. Rowe (7/4/07)

Australian

Climate: the peril we face

Nearly a third of the world's plants and animals face extinction, billions of people will be affected by water shortages, and countries across Asia and Africa will be racked by disease and starvation under alarming global warming forecasts made last night by the world's leading climate experts.

The assessment, made by the 2500 scientists who comprise the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, paints the most disturbing picture yet of the damage the world can expect from global warming.

Depending on how quickly the planet heats up, vulnerable species could begin disappearing as early as 2030.

Australian biodiversity is projected to decline by 2020 at sites such as the Great Barrier Reef, Kakadu National Park and sub-Antarctic regions including Macquarie Island.

Draft versions of the summary of the IPCC report, which contains the dire predictions, were fiercely disputed during a week of tense negotiations, ending with a marathon 24-hour session. Publication was delayed after the US, China and Saudi Arabia objected to the toughly worded text, delegates said.

The Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability report, released last night in Brussels, sets out scientists' predictions for the impact on the planet, its plants and animals if the IPCC's earlier forecast of a 1.1C-6.4C rise in global temperatures by 2100 proves correct.

It predicts that millions of people -- mostly in the poorest regions of the world -- would suffer malnutrition, disease, and increased untimely death rates because of heat waves, floods, storms, fires and droughts.

The productivity of the world's oceans is likely to plunge, as seas become acidic, with today's coastlines vanishing as sea levels rise and increasingly fierce storms lash the shores.

Agricultural systems are expected to change dramatically, as parts of the planet become too hot or too cold for traditional crops. And glaciers providing fresh drinking water to people in the most populated parts of the world, such as Bangladesh, would disappear, leaving nothing but thirst.

"Roughly 20-30 per cent ... of species assessed so far are likely to be at increasingly high risk of extinction if global mean temperatures exceed 2-3C above pre-industrial levels," a draft of the report says. "By 2080, it is likely that 1.1 (billion) to 3.2 billion people will be experiencing water scarcity."

The push to extinction -- caused if global average temperatures rise as little as 1.5C above 1990 levels -- would come in response to the reduction or loss of habitat critical to species which can survive only in specific environments.

In Australia, highly adaptable species such as cane toads, cockroaches and some kangaroo species would probably cope, said Andy Pitman, a climate scientist with the University of NSW. "But species that lack tolerance to climate like some small possums and koalas -- the cute ones -- would not (survive)."

By 2050, flows into the Murray-Darling Basin could fall by 10 per cent to 25 per cent and coastal sea levels could rise by 18-59cm. Even the Australian ski season would be shortened.

However, it is the poorer tropical countries -- the least to blame for the fossil-fuel pollution that scientists say drives global warming -- that will be worst hit.

The report is the second of four volumes that comprise the panel's fourth assessment of global warming. Its review of the science of climate change was released in February, with a report on mitigation options and a synthesis report due in coming months. More than 2500 scientists contributed to the fourth assessment, among them 15 Australian lead authors of the new report. This week, as a working group meeting in Brussels thrashed out the final wording of the summary for policy-makers, extinction became a topic of heated debate between government officials and scientists such as Australian David Karoly, now with the University of Oklahoma.

Dr Karoly -- who will move to Melbourne University later this year -- and other lead authors claimed diplomats attempted to water down their warnings.

They said officials, presumably from the US, forced last-minute changes. US officials were reported to have argued to reduce "quantification", while the Europeans sought to send a strong message about the impacts of climate change.

A final draft, obtained by The Australian, showed the phrase stating that 20-30 per cent of species "will be committed to extinction" had been softened by inserting a reference to species "assessed so far".

Retired scientist Ian Burton -- attending the meeting on behalf of the Stockholm Environment Institute -- said the section had been "diluted".

But Australian lead author CSIRO scientist Kevin Hennessy disagreed with Dr Burton's claim. "In any process there will be differing opinions," he said. "(US officials) simply wanted to ensure the report conveyed the most robust science, if it needed to be defensible."

Dr Hennessy added that comments from officials regarding the section on Australia and New Zealand toughened, rather than softened, the final wording.

Differences between the final draft and the official document support Dr Hennessy's view. Warnings regarding the loss of regional biodiversity by 2030 were strengthened, for instance, by bringing forward the date to 2020.

However, it is clear delegates from China and Saudi Arabia pushed strongly to tone down the degree of certainty of sections covering global natural systems.

They pushed to have statements made with "very high confidence" pulled back to "high confidence", which means more than 80 per cent accuracy as opposed to 90 per cent or near certainty.

Scientists tip the return of Depression-era dust bowl

Washington: The "dust bowl," a Depression-era environmental disaster that drove 500,000 people from the southwestern US, may soon return, scientists warned in a report released yesterday.

The study shows that the same area is "expected to dry up notably in this century and could become as arid as the North American dust bowl of the 1930s," according to the latest issue of Science magazine.

Scientists from NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and several universities had funding from the National Science Foundation for the study, which used 19 computer climate-projection models.

They found that the process might already be under way.

"The recent prolonged drought (in that area) is probably the beginning of the climate change," said Richard Seager of Columbia University in New York, the lead author of the study.

"This will be a challenge to the residents that depend on the cheap and ready availability of water for industrial and agricultural economies."

The study forms part of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fourth Assessment Report, released yesterday.

The more arid climate would be unlike any conditions that existed on record for the area, which covered the southwest of the US and parts of northern Mexico, the scientists said.

Unlike that area's recent droughts, which were caused by El Nino, they said, "the new aridity is caused by a poleward expansion of the subtropical dry zones".

The Earth's atmosphere has been warming since the dawn of the industrial revolution, scientists say, because humans are releasing large amounts of gases such as carbon dioxide and methane.

These so-called greenhouse gases gather in Earth's upper atmosphere and, although they allow the sun's rays in, they do not allow their heat out, acting much like the glass in a greenhouse.

Although the greenhouse effect is necessary for life on the planet, scientists agree that Earth's rising temperature has already begun to melt polar ice caps and change weather.

Doubts over effect of low carbon price

SETTING a low carbon price as "a learning phase" for industry would not address an alarming growth in emissions and would further delay spending on new technology, advocates of sustainable development have insisted.

But other businesses say the concept of a low carbon tax, perhaps about \$5 a tonne, would kick-start new investment.

As reported in The Australian on Thursday, the Productivity Commission, in its submission to the Prime Minister's Emissions Trading Task Group, argues a low charge on carbon - it prefers a tax to trading permits, for now - would prepare the community for any international system that developed.

Business Coalition for Sustainable Energy executive director Ric Brazzale said the commission appeared to have abandoned its earlier views that Australia could make significant inroads into its emissions.

The European Union has set a target of reducing emissions from 1990 levels by 20 per cent by 2020.

Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd has suggested a target of a 60 per cent reduction by 2050, a view backed in principle by the Business Council of Australia.

But Mr Brazzale said Australia was on track for an increase of 27 per cent of its emissions in 1990 by 2020.

The natural gas industry, which sees itself as a lower-emission alternative to coal, says starting with a small charge on carbon emissions was a "step in the right direction".

Australian Pipeline Industry Association chief executive Cheryl Cartwright said an increased determination to reduce emissions should not harm industry. "This proposed step towards a carbon trading system is the right policy signal," she said.

"Such a policy signal would indicate the Government is serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but also determined not to disadvantage Australian industries or cause loss of jobs. Rather than an immediate and blunt high price for carbon emissions, which would cause dramatic change, the phasing in of such a tax would provide direction for industry and help to direct future investment."

The commission's submission comes as government examines models for a trading or tax system, with the idea of a low introductory price of about \$5 still being discussed.

John Howard is expected to use this year's Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation meeting in Sydney to develop global co-operation on carbon emissions and combating deforestation.

9th

Advertiser

Murray flows must rise, Rann tells PM

Premier Mike Rann wants an extra 200 gegalitres of upstream River Murray water be allocated to South Australia to guarantee critical environmental flows.

In a letter to Prime Minister John Howard late last month, Mr Rann said the Federal Government should agree to direct the extra water into SA's river system as part of national management of the waterway.

Mr Rann said that during drought, the excess water would ensure adequate environmental flows and safeguard Adelaide's water supply.

"I note that the Commonwealth has not agreed to South Australia's proposal for a first call on a volume of up to 200GL to be used by South Australia to meet environmental and systems maintenance needs," Mr Rann said in the letter.

"While I recognise your position, the opportunity that the National Plan for Water Security now presents to redesign fully the way water is allocated should not be lost.

"In particular, I believe there is a once in a generation opportunity to reconfigure allocations so that, in times of extremely low flows, Adelaide and other urban centres have adequate supplies in storage and critical environmental flows are maintained."

A spokesman for Mr Howard yesterday said the Government would respond "as appropriate".

Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald last month unveiled the final design and preliminary costs for an emergency weir near Wellington to supply Adelaide. But she said chances of it being built were less than 5 per cent.

SA has already secured its existing entitlement flow of 1850GL each year under the Federal Government's \$10 billion takeover of the Murray-Darling Basin. The extra 200GL of water would be needed when flows into the state were critically low.

Mr Rann said he remained committed to the national agreement which cedes state control of the Murray-Darling Basin to the Federal Government.

The Australian

Geodynamics says it has 'hottest rocks on earth'

26.

Hot rocks explorer Geodynamics has identified a geothermal resource in South Australia's Cooper Basin which it says has an energy output equal to 15 Snowy Mountain hydro electricity power schemes.

The resource contains more than 400,000 petajoules and could support the generation of in excess of 10,000 megawatts of electricity.

Geodynamics chief executive Adrian Williams said with a temperature between 250 and 300 degrees, the resource contained the hottest rocks known on earth.

"The temperature is critical, it is the most important economic driver and it's equivalent to the importance of gold grade," he said.

Hot rock energy works by exploiting the heat generated by special granite stone located below the earth's surface. The heat inside the granite is trapped by overlying rocks, which act as an insulating blanket.

It is extracted by circulating water through the rocks in an engineered, artificial reservoir or underground heat exchanger.

Standard geothermal power stations can then convert the extracted heat into electricity.

26.

But Geodynamics has proven that the granite in the Cooper Basin is naturally fractured, and the fractures are full of pressurised water.

"You put this all together and it means that we can have water flow from the fractured rocks to the surface and we can abstract the heat and re-inject it in a completely closed system," he said.

"We do not have any need for an outside water source and we don't produce any wastewater."

Geothermal energy has been harnessed in other parts of the world.

In northern California, US company Calpine has been pumping out electricity harvested from steam heated deep within earth's surface since the 1920s.

For the past 15 years the company has been pumping in treated wastewater from surrounding communities to replenish water lost during all those years of power production.

And since 2000 its plant has been producing more than six million megawatt-hours, enough to power 750,000 homes annually.

Australia's Centre for International Economics says geothermal energy could generate 10 per cent of nation's electricity requirements by 2030.

The centre's Sydney office director, and co-author of a report about the hot rocks energy industry, Kerry Barwise, said there is huge potential for this renewable energy source.

He estimates recoverable hot rock sources across Australia could meet to the nation's current electricity consumption for the next 450 years.

"If the industry grows in line with the potential resource that has been explored, the value of the gains would be about \$3 billion to \$3.5 billion per year as we get close to 2030," Mr Barwise said.

Because the heat used in the process is eventually replaced by the earth, the energy source has been classified as renewable energy by the International Energy Agency and the Australian Greenhouse Office.

Mr Barwise said there would be environmental benefits in further developing and harnessing the hot rock technology.

"The footprint is very small with geothermal power," he said. "You don't need an enormous mine with huge coal carrying machines, and there are zero emissions."

But according to New Zealand government there are environmental impacts.

It found arsenic and boron are natural geothermal discharges while mercury is discharged into the air from geothermal cooling towers and into water from geothermal wells.

The extraction of heat and fluid could also cause land subsidence, the NZ government said.

There are currently 16 companies in Australia pursuing geothermal energy, with work commitments worth about \$500 million.

Although transmission could be sometime away, Mr Williams said he hopes to be able to direct energy into the national grid by 2010 with material amounts becoming available by 2015. – AAP

10th

FarmOnline

Farmers in WA fear a new 'rain tax'

Farmers and horticulturalists in Western Australia's South West may have to pay for using their own dams under a State Government plan labelled by growers as a 'rain tax'.

The plan is part of the State Government's blueprint for water reform, which will be a major factor for growers when deciding to stay in or leave the industry.

The blueprint states an annual licence fee ranging from \$200-\$3000 would apply from July to about 900 irrigation dams.

The fees would be based on the amount of water the dams hold, but stock and domestic dams would be exempt.

Irrigation dams using 50 megalitres or more per year could also face metering charges.

But charges would not apply to 150,000 domestic bores in Perth, which draw 120 gegalitres annually to water gardens and lawns.

WA Farmers dairy section president, Tony Pratico, says most farmers will be willing to accept water fees as long as they are reasonable.

"There is a conflict of interest with the Water Corporation handling water licences, because it is the marketing arm of the Department of Water, and sells water," Mr Pratico said.

"The Waters and Rivers Commission should oversee the issues.

"The water restrictions are only half hearted; conserving water should be an issue all year round."

SOURCE: *Farm Weekly*, WA's leading rural newspaper, updated daily on *FarmOnline*

Work-family balance a struggle in regional Vic

Rural and regional Victorians face special problems in the perennial battle to find the right balance between work, family and community, according to a new report.

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The report, *Work and Family Balance in Regional Victoria*, contains five case studies of regional companies that recognise the benefits of family-friendly policies and have been rewarded with big savings in retaining skilled staff.

But it also shows full-time job shortages and mixed employment opportunities have made juggling work and family much harder to achieve in regional Victoria.

"Studies of Bendigo, Colac, Horsham and Latrobe City in the report show that working families in the regions have greater caring duties for children and the elderly than their Melbourne counterparts," State Industrial Relations Minister, Rob Hulls, said.

"This is because a smaller proportion of working age people aged between 15 and 65 years live in regional and rural Victoria relative to the numbers of children and the elderly.

"Workers are also more closely involved in community organisations, such as the Country Fire Authority and local sporting clubs, but the report shows that a less diverse range of job opportunities and the sometimes anti-social hours associated with part-time work pose a threat to the vital community service of volunteering.

"Link that with a limited range of businesses and it means fewer opportunities to move jobs.

"That leaves employees more dependent on company goodwill."

But Mr Hulls says some companies in the regions are realising the benefits of providing family-friendly workplaces, including reduced costs and more loyal, happy and longer-serving staff.

SOURCE: *Stock & Land*, weekly rural newspaper, Victoria, posting news updates daily on *FarmOnline*.

The Australian

Sceptics forced to contain hot air on gases

Red Smith isn't exactly known for his timidity on the subject of climate change.

The president of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a free-market think tank based in Washington, has derided concern over global warming and has gone on television to rail against Al Gore's "evil consumptive ways".

But in February, when Smith was called to testify before the Senate Committee on environment and public works, he sounded like a cornered man.

"I am aware," he began somewhat cautiously, "that CEI is regarded as a contrarian voice on the science of climate change."

Senate Republicans had invited him to comment on an emissions-reduction plan put forward by a group of green-minded companies, including General Electric and Duke Energy. But with the balance of power having shifted from the climate naysayers, Smith couldn't just launch into his usual tirade against global warming.

Like a boy forced to apologise for pulling his sister's hair, he ceded grudgingly: "I am happy, for the purposes of this discussion, to accept all the scientific arguments behind their proposals."

Hence, he sniffed, "attempts to allege climate denialism in response to my points are ad hominem attacks not worthy of consideration". It's getting hard out there for a global-warming sceptic.

Former US vice-president Al Gore has an Oscar. The latest assessment from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has declared with 90 per cent certainty that greenhouse gases are largely responsible for heating the planet, a conclusion even the White House now accepts.

Capitol Hill -- where groups like CEI could once count on a friendly hearing from congressional Republicans, 84 per cent of whom are still unconvinced climate change is caused by humans -- is now controlled by the Democrats. And ExxonMobil, which has donated more than \$US2million to CEI since 1998, recently announced it would no longer fund the organisation.

Mocked by enemies, abandoned by erstwhile friends, what's a global-warming sceptic to do?

It wasn't long ago that CEI was revelling in its role as the country's most notorious sceptic group.

In 1997, it helped to form the Cooler Heads Coalition to "dispel the myths of global warming" by, among other things, sending pseudo-experts to testify before the Congress and appear on TV.

The group's energy and global warming policy director, Myron Ebell, played a key role in convincing President George W. Bush to reverse his campaign pledge to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from the utilities industry.

The Clean Air Trust named Ebell its "clean air villain of the month" in March 2001 for his lobbying.

In a bid to pre-empt the release of Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, CEI aired two schmaltzy 60-second spots in 14 cities last year, singing the praises of carbon dioxide. Both ended with the tagline: "They call it pollution ... we call it life."

That sort of misinformation has long been the group's metier. CEI was following a strategy such as the one outlined in a memo from the American Petroleum Institute, which The New York Times obtained in 1998:

"Victory will be achieved when ... recognition of uncertainty becomes part of the conventional wisdom."

So long as people were forced to spend their waking hours debating whether climate change was really happening, they wouldn't have time to discuss what to do about it.

Unfortunately for CEI, that debate is over. Now it finds itself beleaguered in Washington, not to mention vilified in the media.

Ellen Goodman of The Boston Globe wrote recently that climate-change doubters are "on a par with Holocaust deniers". At the end of an interview, CEI's in-house lawyer, Chris Horner, told me with a sigh: "Look, don't write the standard story here, making us out to be the bad guys."

So with their careers in peril, the CEI types are adapting. There are still plenty of global-warming deniers out there, but many sceptics now coalesce around a more moderate-sounding approach.

Ebell insists that neither he nor his colleagues dispute the fact of global warming as they once did.

"We try to react to the scientific research that comes out -- and we've adjusted our political rhetoric as well," he says.

The new line goes something like this: sure, we'll accept that global warming is occurring and humans bear some responsibility, but it's hard to predict exactly how bad a warmer world will be.

And the proposals for reducing emissions in the US are all costly and rife with problems. And even if they could work, we can't stop climate change because it's impossible to convince India and China to curb their rapidly growing emissions. And so on.

One tactic that lately seems to give deniers special pleasure is mounting their case against the global-warming consensus from the Left. So you get the odd spectacle of Smith going before the Senate to denounce cap-and-trade -- the widely endorsed idea that the Government should set a national ceiling on carbon emissions and then allow companies to buy and sell pollution credits -- on populist grounds.

"The corporations we see baying for a cap-and-trade program are out to enrich themselves without thought for the poor," he told Congress. He even pointed out that -- horror -- Enron had once supported the idea.

Or Paul Driessen, the author of *Eco-Imperialism: Green Power, Black Death*, saying things like: "It's incredibly patronising and colonialistic to tell Africa that you can't develop because we're concerned about global warming" -- while arguing that funding the fight against global warming "takes money away from spending on malaria".

However, even as they claim to be on board with the latest science, some deniers have continued peddling half-truths. This became clear during my conversation with Ebell.

"We've had a flat global mean temperature since 1998," he notes. "So what are we worried about?" Ebell is cherry-picking here -- 1998 was an exceptionally hot year, thanks to El Nino, but global average temperatures have risen steadily since 1900.

Meanwhile, many global-warming sceptics are suffering the indignity of having to deny they were ever deniers in the first place. Take Kenneth Green of the American Enterprise Institute.

In 2004, Green wrote a paper with notorious climate-change denier Timothy Ball arguing that the scientific models used to predict global warming were "of dubious merit".

Now he insists he accepts the IPCC's baseline conclusions and says of his relationship with Ball: "The fact we haven't worked together since then suggests we don't agree." Sounds like the heat is getting to him.

Bradford Plumer is a reporter-researcher at The New Republic

Adelaidenow

Rainwater incentive doubled

Householders will be offered an extra \$400 to ensure they have rainwater plumbed into their homes - double the original Government hand-out.

Cabinet decided today to up the money available after only 147 of people took advantage of a \$2 million rainwater scheme announced last year.

Under the old scheme, householders were offered up to \$400 to have a rainwater tank installed and plumbed into their homes to augment existing mains water supplies.

However, only 147 applications were approved.

Under the new scheme, householders will be eligible for:

UP to \$800 to purchase a new rainwater tank and plumb it into an existing home.

UP to \$600 to plumb a rainwater tank into an existing home.

UP to \$200 for a new rainwater tank of 1000 litres or more plumbed into the home – a rebate which also applies to people wishing to add an additional or replacement tank to their existing plumbed system.

Premier Mike Rann said the scheme had been reviewed in January after it had been discovered it was not benefiting "as many people as we would like".

"We want to see this money (the \$2 million) being spent," Mr Rann said.

"It wasn't being spent and we want the scheme to work."

Mr Rann said a review of the 373 applications received by SA Water up until April 5 this year indicated only 147 had been approved with a further 26 awaiting inspection.

These applicants will be able to apply for the increased rebate.

Mr Rann said 200 applications had been rejected for a variety of reasons but more than half (117) had not been accepted due to incorrect or inadequate documentation provided by homeowners.

29.

"We are going to streamline the scheme as well as upgrade the amount of rebates," Mr Rann said.

"Those people who had their applications rejected can now re-apply."

Environment Minister Gail Gago said it was essential that people applying for a rebate provide proof of purchase and installation by producing an itemised plumbing invoice detailing all plumbing work, including parts and labour.

"The revised scheme will be backdated to July 1 last year so those homeowners who have already benefited will now be eligible for the increased rebate," she said.

Harsher restrictions likely

The chances of further water restrictions from July 1 - possibly to level 5 - are "high", the State Government said today.

Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald said increasing restrictions to level 4 or even level 5 would depend upon river inflow assessments across the Murray Darling Basin during the next six to eight weeks.

A final decision was expected on June 15.

"Over the next week or so we'll be looking at what we expect to be the worst case scenario, what might be the better case scenario, what the probabilities are of those occurring and then determine what stages we'll need to take water restrictions to," Ms Maywald said.

"But level three enhanced water restrictions we're currently on are delivering really good results in Adelaide.

"We're seeing significant reductions in the use of water and we've saved 15 billion litres of water since January 1, so we've had a tremendous response from the public."

Ms Maywald said there was no change to the probability of a temporary weir being built near Wellington, with a decision about construction to be made in June or later, depending upon autumn and winter rains.

News.com

Disease rising as Australia dries

UN report tips cyclones, disease from climate change

Murray-Darling level to drop dramatically

More than 5000 heat-related deaths a year by 2050

Cyclones and tropical diseases will become more common and more people will die in heatwaves as Australia dries out, according to a new UN report.

The Australian and New Zealand chapter of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report was released today, and it does not make happy reading.

More climate change news

As well reiterating that the level of the Murray-Darling river system would drop dramatically and crops would struggle as climate change intensified, it also said Aborigines would suffer in an increasingly dry continent.

31.

The IPCC, set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organisation and the UN Environment Program, is a collaboration between more than 2500 climate change scientists and 130 governments.

The general findings of its latest report were unveiled in Brussels last week.

"Australia is very much the drying continent," said Dr Jim Salinger, a lead author for the IPCC's Australasian chapter, today.

Natural hazards, such as a rise in tropical diseases and cyclones were expected to become more common in coming years, resulting in more deaths.

"More health-related deaths in terms of heatwaves and more exposure to pest-borne diseases such as dengue fever.

On the coast of course, particularly Queensland, exposure to ...tropical cyclones," Dr Salinger said.

By 2050, 3200-5200 more heat-related deaths per year were expected and up to 1.4 million more people exposed to dengue fever.

According to the final draft copy of the IPCC chapter on Australia and New Zealand, remote Aborigines could face other dangers from climate change.

"Indigenous communities in remote areas of Australia often have inadequate infrastructure, health services and employment ... Existing social disadvantage reduces coping ability and may restrict adaptive capacity," it says.

Extreme rainfall, flooding and salt inundation of freshwater supplies, changes to mangroves and fire regimes, as well as coastal erosion and rises in sea levels could cause problems to some Aboriginal groups.

Dr Salinger said large areas of the country were likely to have less rainfall and soil moisture.

"This has dramatic implications for crop, pastoral and grazier land production over much of southern and eastern Australia. So they are looking at very serious consequences there."

While agricultural yields may initially increase, this would reverse in the next 30-50 years as water stress worsened.

30.

"The cropping areas will be reduced. There is a potential for large drops. It is all the crops that are grown in the riverine areas and the Murray-Darling Basin," he said.

He said there would also be a projected drop in Australia's snow coverage by 20-85 per cent by 2050.

"I believe that the skiing industry may not be an economic proposition. It depends on the rate of warming entirely," he said.

He also warned that climate changes would likely lead to even bigger reductions in the amount of water in the already stressed Murray-Darling river system, used extensively by irrigators.

"By 2050 ... the Murray-Darling flow could decline in the order of one quarter," he said.

Key findings

* Damage to coral reefs, coasts, rainforests, wetlands and alpine areas. Increased disturbance, loss of biodiversity including possible extinctions. Potentially catastrophic for some systems. Reefs may be dominated by macroalgae by 2050 and possible extinctions of endemic vertebrates in Queensland West Tropics. Shrinking glaciers create slope instability.

* Reduction in water supply for irrigation, cities, industry and riverine environments in areas where stream flow declines. In the Murray-Darling Basin, annual mean flow may drop 10-25 per cent by 2050 and 16-48 per cent by 2100.

* Greater coastal inundation and erosion, especially in regions exposed to cyclones and storm surges. Coastal development is exacerbating the climate risks.

* Reduced crop, pastoral and rangeland production over much of southern and eastern Australia and parts of eastern New Zealand. Reduced grain and grape quality. A southward shift of pests and disease vectors. Increased fire risk for forests.

* Design criteria for extreme climatic events, floods and storm surges very likely to be exceeded more frequently. Increased damage likely for buildings, transport structures, telecommunications, energy services and water services.

Let's do the water deal first, says PM

Prime Minister John Howard says he would prefer all the states to have signed up to his \$10 billion water plan for the Murray-Darling River before answering their call for a \$7 billion reform program.

The Labor states yesterday challenged Mr Howard to bankroll a new \$7 billion national reform program, tackling key education, health and regulatory obstacles as part of a 10-year plan to lift productivity.

"We are trying to spend \$10 billion on water security, but I can't get the agreement of the Victorian premier," Mr Howard told journalists today.

"I think it would be a good idea if we decided on the plan to spend the \$10 billion before we start talking about plans to spend another \$7 billion."

Although the other Murray-Darling basin states have agreed to sign up to the water plan, Mr Howard has failed so far to persuade Victorian Premier Steve Bracks to accept it.

However, Mr Howard said the water deal was not a condition of moving on to other proposals.

"It's strange to me that a premier who is holding up consummation of a \$10 billion investment in Australia's water future should be moving on telling us how we could spend another seven."

In what the premiers say is an historic opportunity to address some of Australia's most pressing needs, the states want to expand provision of early learning to the nation's 250,000 four-year-olds and provide greater access to childcare so more parents can work.

They have also agreed on plans to lift literacy and numeracy standards, and want new programs to improve exercise and diet to slash the 100,000 new cases of type 2 diabetes each year.

As part of a plan to boost energy efficiency, they also suggest a national rollout of smart meters to help families slash energy bills.

And they have challenged the Prime Minister to work with the states on a national emissions trading scheme as part of a co-ordinated response to climate change.

Mr Howard said today he had not seen details of the \$7 billion plan, "but it sound like a normal COAG meeting where states are asking the commonwealth for billions more".

The states' push, which backs Kevin Rudd's key economic policy of greater productivity as the key to sustained economic growth, is outlined in a 10-point reform plan, seen by *The Australian*.

It will form the basis of debate at Friday's crucial Council of Australian Governments' summit in Canberra - the last COAG meeting to be held before the federal election due later this year.

The plan tackles what the states argue are the big challenges facing Australia, and builds on a so-called "third wave" of reform outlined by Mr Bracks in August 2005.

Key figures in the Howard Government are suspicious of an "ambush" by the states.

They believe Labor figures such as Queensland Premier Peer Beattie, Morris Iemma from NSW and Mr Bracks are more interested in helping federal Labor win office than supporting a national reform agenda.

As part of the new plan, the states have agreed on measures to scrap unnecessary regulation and harmonise laws across Australia.

Among a series of hotspots, the states have identified rail safety, trade measurement, product safety legislation and business name regulation. At present, these areas are subject to state discrepancies.

They have also challenged Peter Costello's push to regulate the national economy, instead arguing for a new streamlined and "light-handed" approach to regulating "significant" infrastructure, such as ports and rail.

As details of the states' reform agenda surfaced, the Victorian Premier released details of a \$1.1 billion plan to create up to 12,000 extra childcare places and provide almost universal government-funded preschool for four-year-olds.

Mr Bracks will try to have his scheme debated at Friday's COAG meeting.

The Victorian plan for early childhood aims to lure back into the workforce some of the 80,000 Australian parents it says are not working because of childcare shortages.

"The shortage of skilled workers impacts on Victoria's ability to grow the economy further, so we need those parents to re-enter the workforce," Mr Bracks said. Under his plan Victoria would contribute \$136 million and ask the commonwealth to kick in \$250 million.

The other states have submitted plans also with roughly a 60-40 split on federal-state funding.

Mr Bracks said yesterday the price of childcare had "skyrocketed" on Mr Howard's watch and that he was yet to deliver on last year's promise to give the issue priority.

"The commonwealth has a clear responsibility for childcare," he said.

"If the Prime Minister backs reform at COAG, we can keep down the childcare costs which are keeping Victorian parents out of the workforce."

It is expected Mr Howard's push for nuclear power in Australia will also be debated as the states seek clarification on Canberra's energy reforms. Mr Bracks, the five other Labor premiers and the two Labor chief ministers have outlined their demands in a letter to Mr Howard. They argue the reforms are necessary to lift productivity and workforce participation.

The premiers and chief ministers want Canberra to provide at least \$7 billion over five years to deliver the reform program. They will tell Mr Howard they are also willing to contribute billions of additional dollars.

Under their preferred model, the COAG Reform Council would oversee implementation of the reform agenda and compensate the states and territories according to progress and other costs. It would also "independently" assess the various costs associated with the reforms. The tussle over national reform comes as Mr Rudd has pledged to elevate the issue of federal-state relations ahead of the election campaign. Labor's spokesman on the complex issue, Bob McMullan, argues that Australia faces a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" to transform the federation. This reflects a rare level of consensus between the eight states and territories about the reform process, along with the fact that the next state or territory election is nearly 18 months away.

Last night, Mr Rudd launched a new attack on Mr Howard, claiming the Prime Minister lacked a "long-term economic strategy" to ensure Australia's future prosperity. - *with AAP*

Pressure on for water wasters

Residents of southeast Queensland who flout level-five water restrictions have been warned that their morning shower will be reduced to an uncomfortable trickle.

Brisbane today becomes the first capital city with level-five restrictions.

Queensland Water Commission chairwoman Elizabeth Nosworthy said the community's patience with people who used water excessively was limited. Households using more than 800L a day will be required to audit their water use and identify saving opportunities. If they continue to use too much water, they will face heavy fines, and water pressure to their homes will be reduced substantially.

"They will have enough water to drink and to flush the toilet," Ms Nosworthy said. "I imagine they will have a pretty uncomfortable time in the shower."

The Queensland move follows warnings by the Bracks Government that Victorians who flout level-three restrictions face fines and similar water rationing.

The level of Brisbane's Wivenhoe Dam was at a record low level of 18 per cent yesterday.

The aim of level-five restrictions is to reduce water consumption from its daily level of 180L per person to 140L. It was about 300L before the first restrictions were introduced in 2005.

Ms Nosworthy said she hoped an intensive community awareness program would obviate the need for tough action to enforce the restrictions. "If you drive along at 120km/h and you see a police officer with a radar gun, you apply the brakes. It should be the same with water," she said.

32.

The most important thing people can do to save water is to reduce their average showering time from seven to four minutes. Ms Nosworthy said that if dry conditions persisted, level-six restrictions would be introduced between September and November. "There will not be a great deal more we can do with level six," she said.

"We are doing the hard yards now. We're talking about water use in the home for the first time. Anything more is going to be much harder to regulate."

Ms Nosworthy said she did not believe southeast Queensland dams would run dry before the Beattie Government's \$8billion water grid was in place at the end of next year. Water expert Peter Cullen said authorities in eastern Australia had planned water infrastructure on the basis of rainfall levels since the 1960s.

"They should have been looking at weather records over a much longer period," he said.

"They would have seen how dry it can be and they might have been better prepared as a result."

Under level-five restrictions, only buckets can be used to spot-clean glass, lights and number-plates on vehicles. Private lawns cannot be watered. Gardens can be watered between 4pm and 7pm with buckets and watering cans on allocated days. Swimming pools can be topped up with town water only when a rainwater tank or downpipe diverter has been installed. Water for new pools must be trucked in from outside the region.

AWA

The Queensland Government has signed an MOU with CSIRO, University of Queensland and Griffith University to create the Urban Water Security Research Alliance program in Australia with potential to more than double the water recycling capacity of Australia's capital cities. The Alliance is to receive \$25m over 5 years for its activities.

WA's Environmental Protection Authority has released an audit report by the Water & Rivers Commission (WRC) with the environmental conditions and decline in groundwater dependent ecosystems applying to groundwater abstraction from the Gngangara Mound. It recommends that sustainable limits for all groundwater abstraction there be reviewed and revised urgently.

Brisbane and SE Queensland residents are hoped to reduce water use to 140 litres/cap.d, as storages in the region move down to 20% capacity. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2004-05 Australian households consumed an average 103 kL/cap/day (282 L/cap/day) or 8% less than year 2000-01. Elsewhere, water restrictions unthinkable 10 years ago are now in place.

Queensland Water Commission has introduced Level 5 Water Restrictions for the SE Qld region. Bucket/can watering is allowed for just 3h, on three days. Households using more than 800 L/day will have to complete a self assessment and businesses using >10 ML/a will have to complete Water Efficiency Management Plans.

Final Issues Paper from IPART on Review of DEUS Developer Chargers Guidelines for Water Supply, Sewerage and Stormwater is now available for download from website. Sydney Water has a new website.

Nanyang Technological University and University of New South Wales Asia, a private university owned by UNSW-Australia, have announced the formation of the Singapore Membrane Technology Centre (SMTC), a joint venture between the two institutions. Singapore's government EWI will support the Centre, which has a budget of S\$27m (\$18m) over the next five years.

The European Union says that water quality in Europe's rivers, coastal waters, lakes, and aquifers remains poor, despite rules requiring cleanups and punishments for polluters. Any EU nation that fails to meet clean water standards by 2015 will be hauled into court. Only 43% of groundwater and 28% of surface water is likely to meet quality targets by then.

In Cyprus, reservoir levels on the island are at only 26% capacity so stiff fines are to be given to water wasters. Dams currently hold 72 GL of water compared to 135 GL at this time in 2006 and production of desalinated seawater is being increased.

20% of Ireland's water supplies are claimed to be contaminated with Cryptosporidium; EPA is concerned about municipal plants that do not have the technology to remove the parasite and cases in Galway have led to 'boil water' advisories. EC is sending a final written warning to Ireland for failing to comply with a 2002 ECJ ruling on E.coli.

The average Italian family spends 300 euros a year on Mineral Water despite the fact that tap water is cheaper and just as safe. Italy also manufactures 250,000 tonnes of plastic bottles a year, which not only clutter up landfills but emit a significant amount of carbon dioxide during the production process.

Nathan Rees is to be NSW's Minister for Water Utilities and Verity Firth will be the Minister Assisting the Minister for Climate Change.

Safe Drinking Water: Lessons from Recent Outbreaks in Affluent Nations. S&E Hrudey. Detailed overview of a series of incidents where breaches to control barriers or failures resulted in water borne illness. Lessons learned & management practice changes are described A very popular review. Available via [\(Email\)](#) Cost \$172 plus p. & h.

There are concerns for the Prime Minister's \$10B water plan, including concerns about timing and review of draft Commonwealth legislation, which highlight its lack of detail.

An underground aquifer that supplies more than half of Perth's drinking water & much of the city's irrigation is drying up after years of overuse. WA's EPA has accused their Government of failing to heed years of warnings.

An expert panel is investigating options for the Bracks government as it is tipped that one of the world's biggest water desalination plants could be built in Victoria as efforts to drought-proof Melbourne gather pace.

Water scarcity poses the biggest threat to Australia from climate change according to Bureau of Meteorology director Dr Geoff Love, who contributed to the latest UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report because water was our key resource under threat.

Adelaide Advertiser

Rain 'the only answer'

Rain is the only solution to fix the ailing River Murray, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer (Yes, you are right Mr. Downer but in the words of Dr. Wendy Craik AM, "we need a metre of rain in the catchments in NSW & Vic) said yesterday. He said the State distribution of water was not the cause of the river's problem (though over allocation is a major problem).

CONFERENCE: Adelaide to host 1300 oil and gas experts

Focus on global warming

"Climate change definitely becomes a boardroom issue"

Global warming will be high on the agenda at the largest oil and gas conference ever held in Adelaide, starting next week.

11th

FarmOnLine

Salt mapped from above

An airborne survey to map salinity in the soil and groundwater is underway along the River Murray, and will soon be in the North Central Catchment Management Authority's (CMA) region, from Lake Boga to Gunbower, and near Swan Hill. The survey area started at the South Australian border and follows the course of the river all the way to Gunbower near Echuca, Vic, using two helicopters and AEM systems.

The low flying helicopter with a torpedo shaped 'bird' in tow has already been in the in other regions since mid-February, and flies from early morning to mid afternoon over designated river and floodplain areas.

The survey takes in both sides of the river in Victoria and New South Wales, and involves cooperation between Catchment Management Authorities who will gain data essential for future decision-making in regard to salinity management initiatives.

The first helicopter has so far flown approximately 1,585 square kilometres from the South Australian border to Wentworth along the river in an 8 km radius. Meanwhile, the second helicopter has been covering the Robinvale/Euston and Boundary Bend areas and has so far flown approximately 558 square kilometres.

The survey uses technology called airborne electro-magnetics or AEM, which measures variations in the electrical conductivity of the ground and can be used to make a 3-dimensional picture through the top 40 metres of the earth. SOURCE: *Stock & Land*, Vic, rural weekly newspaper, updated daily by *FarmOnline*, Rural Press.

The Australian

Climate change hit list

A \$300 million-plus project to map the impact of climate change on coastal areas and farmlands will be considered by national leaders on Friday.

John Howard has told the premiers he wants a "wide-ranging discussion" on climate change at the Council of Australian Governments summit, including on a potential national emissions trading scheme.

But the Prime Minister and the premiers will also consider a major report that suggests an urgent scoping study be undertaken into the nation's ability to adapt to climate change.

A digital map likely to form part of a bigger project will pinpoint coastal communities that face being washed away by rising sea levels, identifying roads, homes, businesses and transport and port facilities in danger of being submerged.

Under the COAG plan, scientists and environmental consultants would examine in detail how climate change will affect particularly vulnerable regions, such as far north Queensland.

34.

They will also assess the impact on Australia's farmers and other agricultural producers whose businesses could be severely harmed by global warming.

The Australian has been told by state officials that expenditure on the project could be more than \$300 million over seven years. However, the commonwealth last night disputed the scoping study would cost that much.

One senior official familiar with the confidential report said it would recommend a series of research projects be undertaken. It would examine the likely impact of global warming on particular crops, and assess marginal farming lands that might become unviable if doomsday scenarios became reality.

The push by national leaders to examine the impact of global warming comes after a high-level UN taskforce warned on Friday that one-third of the world's plants and animals face extinction if global temperatures continue to rise. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change also forecast a grim future for the Great Barrier Reef and Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory if action were not taken.

Under pressure to agree to a \$7billion national reform agenda put forward by the states, Mr Howard has told the premiers he wants to put climate change high on the COAG agenda.

Friday's meeting provides the opportunity for a "broader discussion on climate change", he said.

"To this end, I am proposing that climate change be accorded an agenda item in its own right which would enable us to have a wide-ranging discussion on this important matter, including an update on the progress of my Emissions Trading Task Group, as well as consider the reports that we previously requested," Mr Howard told the premiers, in his COAG letter.

Scientists have already begun work on the digital map of Australia's coastline to help pinpoint communities that face being washed away by rising sea levels. The federal Government's Australian Greenhouse Office is co-ordinating dozens of scientists to take part in the project amid fears about dramatic rises in sea levels that climate change could trigger.

A climate change business risk analyst, Karl Mallon, yesterday told a Sydney forum the cash value of a home would be cut by up to 80 per cent if it were deemed uninsurable for a severe weather event caused by global warming.

The COAG project, which has been driven by South Australian Premier Mike Rann, is likely to include the map and will provide crucial information for the plan to look at increasing agriculture in the water-rich north of Australia.

Mapping will be crucial to help predict where rivers will run and what potential farmland will open up in the now drier parts of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. The increased rain in the north of Queensland will, however, come at the cost to the southeast corner, already struggling in the drought.

While climate change will be a core agenda issue, the premiers also want Mr Howard to endorse a 10-point national reform plan covering key health, education and regulatory obstacles to improving productivity, which they say will cost Canberra more than \$7 billion over five years.

The eight state and territory leaders, all Labor, said Friday's meeting "represents a historic opportunity for us to announce the beginning of a long-term reform agenda to secure future prosperity".

The leaders, who will discuss their plans with Mr Howard tomorrow night at The Lodge ahead of Friday's COAG meeting, said they had agreed to "dozens of specific policy measures".

These include a commitment to nationally consistent teaching standards - an area of reform the states have traditionally been loath to tackle.

They also want COAG to sign off on new measures to boost literacy and numeracy, lift the level of childcare and cut red tape for business.

In their letter to Mr Howard, the premiers and chief ministers said the national reform agenda would only be possible "if all governments play their part and work together".

Mr Howard, who is expected to outline some initiatives of his own at Friday's meeting, responded cautiously to the states' demands.

He pointed out that Victorian Premier Steve Bracks, who has spearheaded the reform agenda, had so far refused to sign up to the \$10 billion blueprint for the Murray-Darling river system.

"I mean, I think it would be a good idea if we decided on the plan to spend the \$10 billion before we start talking about plans to spend another \$7 billion, although I note that because of the strong economy we have, the states imagine that there's large amounts of money available," Mr Howard said.

"But I want the meeting on Friday to be successful. I think we should all set about being quiet achievers in the interests of the Federation on Friday."

Queensland, NSW, the ACT and South Australia have already signed up to the Murray-Darling plan but Mr Howard said he was not making Victoria's acceptance a condition of broader COAG reforms.

"But it passes strange to me that a premier who is holding up consummation of a \$10 billion investment in Australia's water future should be moving on to telling us how we can spend another seven (billion)," he said.

Along with climate change and a new national reform agenda, COAG will consider health, skills, indigenous affairs, counter-terrorism and local government funding issues.

Mr Bracks challenged the Prime Minister to put productivity ahead of politics.

"This is really D-Day for COAG and for federal and state governments," he said.

"We have been discussing and debating the national reform agenda, the third wave of reform, for at least the last five years. There is in-principle agreement on how to proceed, but we need ... funding in place, particularly for literacy and numeracy skills, for early childhood development and for fighting diabetes and obesity.

"We want the commonwealth to commit money now and not hoard money for an election campaign later in the year. Now is the time to pursue real reform outside the election cycle on work that's been undertaken for the past four or five years."

Mr Bracks - who was expected to talk privately with Mr Howard late yesterday - was speaking at a childcare centre in a visit designed to highlight his plan for early childhood development.

Additional reporting: Rick Wallace, AAP

Turnbull 'a hypocrite' on logging

Federal Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull has deflected criticism that he is a hypocrite for backing a bid to overturn a ban on logging in Tasmania while hawking the Howard Government's \$200 million global forests plan. Mr Turnbull will join Forestry Tasmania on Friday in its appeal against a ban on logging at the 10,000ha Wielangta Forest. Greens leader Bob Brown accused Mr Turnbull of hypocrisy for pushing for a ban on illegal logging in Indonesia while supporting further deforestation in Tasmania.

The Federal Court last November found logging at Wielangta, about 50km north of Hobart, was illegal because it threatened endangered species such as the stag beetle, Tasmania's wedge-tailed eagle and the swift parrot. Senator Brown said the federal Government was to be complimented for halting the importation of tropical rainforest timber because such logging threatened rare creatures like the orang-utan with extinction in Indonesia.

But it was "a glaring hypocrisy" for Mr Turnbull not to halt the illegal clearing of more than 100,000ha a year of native forests in Australia.

"On one hand we have got Malcolm Turnbull saying he wants to stop illegally logged rainforest in Indonesia, but he wants to continue with the illegal logging of forests in Tasmania," Senator Brown said in Hobart.

A spokeswoman for Mr Turnbull said the 1997 regional forest agreement between the federal and Tasmanian governments continued to provide a sound basis for protection of endangered species and the environment.

"There is nothing in the court's Wielangta judgment that calls into question the integrity of that agreement," she said.

Mr Turnbull was back in the country yesterday after a whistlestop tour of Indonesia - which has the world's highest carbon emissions after the US and China - to announce the first projects under the Government's \$200million forests fund.

But Senator Brown said the court application to lift the logging ban in the state forest was a contradiction of federal government policy.

Big parties put Greens in shade

THE sustained enthusiasm for a Rudd Labor government coupled with the impact of left-wing rock star Peter Garrett is pulling back much of the protest vote supporting the Greens.

The recent Newspoll of almost 7000 voters showed the national environment party polling at only 5 per cent, just months out from the next federal election.

The Greens traditionally poll highest outside of the election cycle, with their vote falling as voters enter the ballot box. The party's current polling is more than two percentage points below the October 2004 election result of 7.2per cent.

Political analyst and former Liberal chief of staff Graeme Morris said that with issues such as water and climate change in the mainstream, the major parties were taking the political space traditionally held by the Greens and Australian Democrats.

"For a while the Labor Party outsourced their left wing to the Greens," he said. "And now with Peter Garrett and others, many of those people are returning to the Labor Party. They don't have to go via green preferences.

"Because both major parties are focused on some of the territory normally occupied by the Greens, they are getting drowned out in their own issue. (Greens leader) Bob Brown is having difficulty keeping his profile high on issues where (Environment Minister) Malcolm Turnbull and Peter Garrett and John Howard and Kevin Rudd are expressing their views and taking action."

Mr Morris said that while support for minor parties such as the Greens had waned as support for Labor had grown, he expected the Greens to find new defining issues to reassert their prominence to their constituency by the end of the year. "You will find the Greens will manufacture a single issue which will become a totemic green issue and that will enable them to raise their profile through an election campaign," he said.

Election analyst Malcolm Mackerras said the political vacuum caused by the collapse of the Australian Democrats meant that, while the Greens' primary vote might decline, the party could still elect as many as four senators at the election, giving them six overall and a powerful influence on Senate voting. Newspoll chief executive Martin O'Shannessy said the large size of the Newspoll sample meant it was a reliable guide for current minor party

voting trends. He said there was traditionally a leak to the minor parties when the Opposition was doing badly, with the current trend evidence of a uniting of anti-Coalition voters.

"The importance of the environment is coming up and water is an election issue," he said.

"It's the protest vote that used to be with Labor that is being brought home."

The other green house effect

Global warming or climate change - call it what you will - has made itself at home in Canberra. In the past three years, the national capital and the ACT have been so dry, the Bureau of Meteorology rates the region "very much below average" for rainfall.

Temperatures last year were 2C to 3C above average. So not much rain but plenty of sun and extraordinary warmth. It's enough to make you turn on the lawn sprinklers and crank up the airconditioner, but not Ian Lawrence or Derek Wrigley. Both have modified their homes and gardens to save and reuse water and to cut down on energy use and costs.

Lawrence, an adjunct professor in landscape design at the University of Canberra, has had 5000 people through his yard at Higgins.

In 2001 he tore up his thirsty lawn and replaced it with 300 native plants.

Tanks capture and filter grey water, which is pumped through dripper hoses.

Rainwater tanks catch what the clouds send down.

When rainfall totals are normal, he is "more than self-sufficient" for water.

Downpipes from a shed and carport feed into gravelled trenches called swales. A pond collects run-off and slowly releases it into the stormwater system.

"On New Year's Eve we had 70mm of rain in 20 minutes," Lawrence says. The pond's raised liner held back most of the run-off and let it out in about six hours.

The set-up cost about \$3500.

Wrigley, who was Australian National University resident architect until his retirement in 1977, has built and lived in five solar houses.

At his latest home, stainless steel mirrors on the southern side of the house reflect the sun into rooms that would otherwise be cold and dark. Solar cells provide electricity.

"Last year we produced 105per cent of consumption. We put 185 kilowatt hours back into the grid," Wrigley says.

Knitted sunshades keep out 90per cent of the sun's heat through windows in summer but let in light.

Double-glazed windows insulate against incoming heat in summer and outgoing warmth in winter.

"We spend only a few cents a week on gas for heating," Wrigley says. "I've been regarded as the bad boy in the body corporate; 'that bloke who puts up silly things in his garden'. But now they're all knocking on my door asking how to overcome climate change."

Adelaide Advertiser

Grim forecast for farms

Farmers in the State's drought ravaged \$3 billion field crop industry are desperate for autumn rains so they can begin sowing.

12th

FarmOnLine

Surprise results in salinity research

Results from research into salinity at Gumble east of Molong, NSW, to be presented at a field day next Tuesday, have yielded some surprises of national interest.

The most surprising finding is that the common assumption about the flow of groundwater is incorrect for the catchment.

"Rather than following stream flow on the surface, groundwater is actually flowing in the opposite direction," Justin Hughes says.

He's a NSW Department of Primary Industries hydrology researcher and Charles Sturt University doctoral student.

Mr Hughes says the information being developed from the study will help farmers and other natural resource managers put catchment management solutions, such as tree plantings, in the right place.

Research updates will be presented at the research site, "Bellevue" and the Gumble hall.

SOURCE: *The Land*, NSW, horticulture news service.

37.

New insight into wheats that can live with salt

It may not be quite as salt loving as a mangrove, but scientists have discovered that wheat has more in common with the coastal dweller than anyone realised.

The Molecular Plant Breeding CRC's Dr Yusuf Genc has found that different varieties of wheat have different ways of dealing with salinity.

The research has implications for cereal breeders, who have long sought to breed varieties that are resistant to salinity.

"There are very few varieties so far that have been released from breeding programs with any kind of salinity tolerance," says Dr Genc.

According to Dr Genc, keeping the salt out is not the only coping mechanism.

Rather, somewhat like a mangrove tree, it seems that some wheat varieties take the salt up into their roots, but are less affected by it than other varieties.

"The majority of people working in this field are trying to improve the ability of the plant to exclude the salt," he says.

"Our research has shown, however, that keeping the salt out is not the only coping mechanism.

"Rather, some wheat varieties take the salt up into the plant and tolerate it."

The mechanism, known as 'tissue tolerance', could result in dramatic yield increases for salinity-affected growers if it could be bred into other wheat varieties.

Dr Genc is a Molecular Plant Breeding CRC researcher based at the University of Adelaide and South Australian Research and Development Institute.

Genc and his team grew two wheat varieties, Berkut and Krichauff, at varying salt concentrations, and evaluated their salt uptake and grain yields.

While both are known to be good salt tolerators, they found that Berkut does not prevent the salt from entering the plant as well as Krichauff.

Instead, it takes the salt in but still yields as much as Krichauff if not more.

Some varieties have the exclusion ability whereas other varieties had the tissue tolerance ability.

Genc says that this could be the reason breeders have had such difficulty selecting for salt tolerance.

"When you test such varieties together, the relationship between salt content in the plant and salinity tolerance tends to disappear because you have different varieties with different abilities," he says

Now, with a better understanding of the physiology of salt tolerance, Genc is looking to identify DNA markers, a kind of genetic 'fingerprinting', which will allow breeders to screen for salt tolerance.

With field trials planned for later this year, Genc hopes to find the same effect in the field.

When most people think of salinity they imagine vast and desolate tracts of land, too salty for even the hardiest crop to grow.

But the conspicuous 'dryland' salinity is only part of Australia's salinity problem.

Transient salinity, the seasonal movement of salt in and out of the soil profile, is not as severe, but is responsible for losses of up to \$1.3 billion per year for the Australian farming economy.

Some 67pc of the dryland cropping area in Australia has potential for transient salinity.

And when salinity hits, the toxicity and resulting decrease in growth makes for meagre yields.

While no small effort has gone into the development of new salt-tolerant varieties, researchers have so far had limited success. SOURCE: *Stock Journal*, SA, weekly rural newspaper, updated daily by *FarmOnline*.

news.com.au

Mankind 'can't influence' climate

Solar activity a greater climate change driver than man

'0.1 per cent of carbon dioxide due to human activity'

El Nino, La Nina caused by earthquake and volcanic activity

MANKIND is naive to think it can influence climate change, according to a prize-winning Australian geologist.

Solar activity is a greater driver of climate change than man-made carbon dioxide, argues Ian Plimer, Professor of Mining Geology at the University of Adelaide and winner of several notable science prizes.

"When meteorologists can change the weather then we can start to think about humans changing climate," Prof Plimer said.

"I think we really are a little bit naive to think we can change astronomical and solar processes."

Speaking last night after presenting his theory for the first time, to the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy in Sydney, Prof Plimer said he had researched the history of the sun, solar and supernovae activity and had been able to correlate global climates with solar activity.

"But correlations don't mean anything, you really need a causation," Prof Plimer said.

So he then examined how cosmic radiation builds up clouds.

38.

A very active sun blows away the cosmic radiation, while a less active sun allows radiation to build up, he said.

"So you can very much tie in temperature, cloud formation, cosmic radiation and the sun," he said.

The next part of Prof Plimer's research was to examine the sources of carbon dioxide.

He said he found that about 0.1 per cent of the atmospheric carbon dioxide was due to human activity and much of the rest due to little-understood geological phenomena.

Prof Plimer also argued El Nino and La Nina were caused by major processes of earthquake activity and volcanic activity in the mid-ocean ridges, rather than any increase in greenhouse gases.

Nor does the melting of polar ice have anything to do with man-made carbon dioxide, he said.

"Great icebergs come off, not due to temperature change but due to the physics of ice and the flow of ice," Prof Plimer said.

"There's a lag, so that if temperature rises, carbon dioxide rises 800 years later.

"If ice falls into the ocean in icebergs that's due to processes thousands of years ago."

On the same basis, changes to sea level and temperature are also unrelated to anything happening today, he said.

"It is extraordinarily difficult to argue that human-induced carbon dioxide has any effect at all," he said.

Prof Plimer added that as the planet was already at the maximum absorbance of energy of carbon dioxide, any more would have no greater effect.

There had even been periods in history with hundreds of times more atmospheric carbon dioxide than now with "no problem", he said.

The professor, a member of the Australian Skeptics, an organisation devoted to debunking pseudo-scientific claims, denied his was a minority view.

"You'd be very hard pushed to find a geologist that would differ from my view," he said.

He said bad news was more fashionable now than good and that people had an innate tendency to want to be a little frightened.

But Prof Plimer conceded the politics of greenhouse gas emissions meant that attention was being given to energy efficiency, which he supported.

The professor, who is writing a book on the subject, said he only used validated scientific data, published in reputable peer-reviewed refereed journals, as the basis of his theories.

The Australian

China, Japan to go green together

China & Japan last night agreed to an extensive program of co-operation on environmental repair and energy savings, as the two Asian giants began working to put their troubled relationship on a new footing.

In a potentially important development for the global campaign to control greenhouse-gas emissions, China offered for the first time to participate in the creating of a post-Kyoto Protocol framework.

Beijing is a Kyoto signatory but the protocol, which expires in 2012, imposes no greenhouse-gas commitments on China. Because any new framework would demand emission-reduction targets from China, its leaders have until now been reluctant to discuss a new regimen.

Environment and energy agreements were signed after a summit meeting between Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Premier Wen Jiabao, who is making the first visit by a top Chinese leader to Tokyo in more than six years.

The leaders are seeking to halt five years of deteriorating political ties, culminating 18 months ago with a complete breakdown over then Japanese prime minister Junichiro Koizumi's insistence on visiting the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, which honours Class A war criminals among Japan's war dead.

Welcoming the Chinese Premier, Mr Abe said his three-day visit would be "a big step toward building strategically and mutually beneficial relations".

"That is the most important goal of my visit," Mr Wen replied. "We need to talk about the details of what strategically and mutually beneficial relations would entail."

Mr Abe, who made an icebreaking trip to Beijing a fortnight after he took over as Prime Minister in late September, last night told Mr Wen he would go to China again in the northern autumn. He asked that China's President Hu Jintao make a reciprocal visit next year. Officials said the Chinese had agreed in principle to a March-April trip.

In their environmental statement last night Japan and China expressed political will to solve climate-change problems and aim to create a post-Kyoto framework in 2013 or afterwards.

Officials said this commitment represented China's acknowledgment of its responsibility to repair massive environmental degradation caused by its super-charged industrialisation over the past 15 years. Other concrete measures in the statement mainly dealt with Japanese involvement in projects to conserve Chinese water resources and restore polluted waterways and aquifers.

The two countries also pledged to work together on monitoring acid rain and "yellow sand" (Chinese topsoil blown across the region at this time of year) and use Japanese technologies for clean coal-power generation.

They made a general commitment to improve energy security "not only between the two countries but in East Asia and the world". Japan pledged to transfer energy-saving technology to China, to joint energy conservation studies and to training 300 Chinese technicians over the next three years.

The two countries agree to co-operate on nuclear power development, which their statement says will help to restrain greenhouse emissions and curb demand on other energy supplies.

There was no mention of the most contentious issue between Beijing and Tokyo: petroleum exploration and development in the East China Sea, where the two governments have competing territorial-waters claims. However, officials said last night negotiations were continuing towards a formula for joint development of gas and oil resources in the contested areas.

Before Mr Wen arrived, officials signed an agreement for Japanese rice to be exported to China for the first time since 2003 when Beijing banned it, ostensibly for quarantine reasons. Today Mr Wen will outline China's vision for the new relationship in a speech to Japan's national parliament, the Diet, and meet Emperor Akihito.

Gore's hot acts to cool global warming

It took Bob Geldof's persuasive powers to rally support in aid of Africa. Now Al Gore is hoping to help save the planet with a day of global concerts to raise awareness of climate change.

Madonna and the Police will be the star attractions at a series of concerts from London to Shanghai organised by Mr Gore, the former US vice-president, to help combat climate change.

More than 100 acts, spread over five continents, will play in the Live Earth event, scheduled for July 7.

Organisers hope to reach an audience of two billion people through television, radio and the internet.

Red Hot Chili Peppers, the reformed Genesis and Madonna will be headline attractions at the British concert. Star names will appear at events in Australia, the US, Brazil, South Africa, Japan and China during a day of music that organisers say will "deliver a call to action" on global warming.

"By attracting an audience of billions, we hope Live Earth will launch a global campaign giving a critical mass of people around the world the tools they need to help to solve the climate crisis," Mr Gore said yesterday. The concerts are modelled on Bob Geldof's Live8 event in 2005, which focused on debt relief for Africa.

Adelaide Advertiser

Framework for change

Climate change is the biggest challenge facing this country and radical action is needed from governments if we are to address it.

That is what Premier Mike Rann will put to tomorrow's COAG meeting. Mr Rann said COAG needed to lay down a broad framework for how Australia would fare "economically, environmentally and socially" from the effects of climate change. Proposing a new framework for climate change, which he estimates will cost nearly \$350 million, he said it was vital Australian governments equipped themselves well to understand the nature of the challenges.

Mr Rann will ask COAG to establish an "Australian Centre for Climate Change Adaptation" and to conduct national assessment maps on areas of vulnerability. "We can't pretend climate change isn't affecting us," he said.

"The drought and low flows in the River Murray is a frightening glimpse of the future. However much we move to lower carbon emissions, we must accept we are faced with decades of climate change due to emissions in the atmosphere." - Mark Kenny

Leaders push for third wave of reform

Progress towards emissions trading and a federal takeover of some business regulations will be on the table when Prime Minister John Howard meets with state and territory counterparts tonight and tomorrow.

Premiers and Chief Ministers are gathering in Canberra today ahead of tomorrow's Council of Australian Governments meeting - the last before this year's federal election.

The meeting is shaping as one of the most crucial in years with the two levels of government from opposite sides of the political fence potentially at odds on key issues - tax, climate change, education and health.

The Labor states are keen to promote a so-called "third wave" of reform building on the financial deregulation of the 1980s and the competition policy reforms of the 1990s.

The Commonwealth has argued the states have failed to embrace reform challenges in crucial areas - port regulation and the abolition of business taxes, including stamp duty on commercial property transactions.

The states want the Federal Government to commit to a multibillion-dollar plan designed to lift national productivity over 10 years. The package includes early childhood education and smart meters for households to save electricity. Mr Howard is tipped to be considering an emissions trading scheme designed to put a price on air pollution without disadvantaging Australian business.

He has also proposed a \$100 million program of cutting red tape and will push Victoria to sign up to his \$10 billion Murray Darling rescue.

ABC scaremongering on the environment

NEWSFLASH: Federal Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull says he can't guarantee the Great Barrier Reef will still be here in 20 years.

That's how our ABC breathlessly reported Turnbull's response to the recycled report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

For the record, Turnbull also refuses to guarantee the world will not be under attack from an intergalactic force or threatened by any asteroids streaking toward it in 2027.

But your ABC hasn't got around to reporting his position on those eventualities because intergalactic forces and asteroid attacks are not part of its agenda. Yet.

If our ABC has found anyone to guarantee the security of the Great Barrier Reef, the height of Mt Everest or the snows of Kilimanjaro in 2027, it isn't saying.

But the fact that it can lead its news broadcast with a statement of such utter fatuity indicates how deeply its cultural warriors have committed themselves to flaying the Government over claims of human-induced global warming.

It is interesting to note that, when the ABC was broadcasting Turnbull's refusal to guarantee the future of the Great Barrier Reef at 9am on the Saturday of the Easter weekend, he was in Washington where he had just secured the support of the US for the Howard Government's initiative to reverse global deforestation.

While the ABC was either replaying an old broadcast of Opposition environment spokesman Peter Garrett demanding Australia sign up to the failed Kyoto Accord, or playing a new interview with Garrett repeating his old demand that Australia sign the dead accord, Turnbull was meeting White House Council on Environmental Quality chairman James Connaughton, the Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs Dr Paula Dobriansky and other senior US officials, and securing their agreement to work together to face the international challenge of global warming.

And, while the ABC was replaying Garrett's new or recycled views, Turnbull had flown halfway around the world to Indonesia to talk to his Indonesian counterpart, Rachmat Witoelar, about Indonesia's support for the projects already under way aimed at preserving old growth forest and stopping illegal logging.

According to Turnbull, Indonesia has even agreed to permit the use of satellites to identify areas of illegal logging, a plan critics were quick to claim would be unacceptable to Australia's northern neighbour.

Those critics were wrong, but our ABC has yet to broadcast that fact.

"Indonesia is more than willing to accept any technical assistance we can provide," Turnbull said.

"If the world could halve the current rate of deforestation, we could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by three billion tonnes a year, almost 10 times more than what would be achieved under Kyoto."

Garrett is not Kyoto's only champion. Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd is also trying to push Australia into the joke protocol and last week the European Union's Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas was given ample ABC air time to bash the Howard Government for refusing to sign up and place the Australian economy at risk.

The problem for the EU is that Australia is actually on track to meet its Kyoto target but, as Prime Minister John Howard noted last week, at least 12 of the EU's 15 member nations, including Denmark, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Italy, are unlikely to meet their 2012 Kyoto commitments.

What Al Gore, the EU, the UN, Garrett and Rudd all choose to ignore is the science which shows that the Earth's climate has always been variable and that climate change can be attributed to many things but that among the least likely to have had any influence is human activity.

Professor Ian Plimer of the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Adelaide says the current theory of human-induced global warming is not in accord with history, archaeology, geology or astronomy and must be rejected. Further, he says, the current promotion of this theory as science is fraudulent and the current alarmism on climate change is not science.

Some 96 per cent of the greenhouse effect is due to water vapour, the rest is due to CO₂, methane and other gases, he says.

Of the CO₂, 95 per cent is due to natural processes (volcanoes, plants, bacteria etc) with the remainder (about 0.1 per cent) resulting from human activities.

Even if humans stopped producing CO₂ now, it would not make the slightest difference to atmospheric CO₂, as natural sources swamp the human sources.

Even so, the atmosphere is almost at the lowest level of CO₂ content of the past 4550 million years, and the role of the greatest biomass on Earth bacteria and CO₂ is an unknown.

While some adults believe they will feel better if they publicly confess to leaving a light on at night and while *The Sydney Morning Herald* believes we should take a lead from frightened primary school students, most rational people want to understand the science behind the wild claims being made for climate change.

41.

To date, the debate has been led by those seeking political and economic gain through fear.

Professor Plimer's view is unpopular because it absolves humans from blame and robs the self-flagellating publicity-seekers of their moment in the spotlight.

It does not however mean that his views are not as deserving of equal consideration in this debate.

As for Turnbull and Garrett, one is out there walking the walk and the other is just talking through his very necessary hat.

The Australian

States must share water, says Howard

Prime Minister John Howard says he is in favour of moving water across state borders if it means solving Australia's water problems.

Federal Water Resources Minister Malcolm Turnbull is to release a proposal today to pump water from northern NSW rivers to Queensland's drought stricken south-east.

"If we are ever to solve our water problems we have got to stop automatically thinking in terms of the reactions of jurisdictions and think nationally," Mr Howard told reporters in Canberra today.

"As far as I am concerned, I don't care very much about state borders, and if there's a plan that will take water from one part of Australia to another and solve a problem on terms that are fair and equitable to people in both parts of the country, well, I am in favour of it."

Mr Howard said the states should not dismiss the idea simply because it had been put forward by a federal minister.

"Heavens above, we have got to try and think about outcomes for people and benefits for people," Mr Howard said.

"It's Australian water, it's not NSW water, it's Australian water and I think Australian water should be available for Australians on terms that are fair and equitable for people in all parts of the country." - *AAP*

Bracks holds out on \$10bn Murray-Darling scheme

Victorian Premier Steve Bracks is standing by his decision to reject Prime Minister John Howard's \$10 billion water reform scheme ahead of tomorrow's meeting of state and federal leaders.

Mr Bracks will join the other premiers later today to develop strategies for the meeting in Canberra tomorrow of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in Canberra.

But Victoria is alone in its refusal to sign up to Mr Howard's push for federal control over water and irrigation in the Murray-Darling basin.

"Someone has to say that the \$10 billion (plan) done on the back of a postage stamp, done without consideration from treasury, done without any process through cabinet, done without any consideration from the Murray-Darling Basin commission, is really poor policy," Mr Bracks told reporters today.

"We're happy to help and we're happy to offer a compromise which will give the commonwealth more authority, much easier regulation, more authority to undertake water allocations and to resolve issues nationally."

In their own meeting today, under the umbrella of the newly-formed Council for the Australian Federation, South Australia is expecting to chair state and territory discussion on the Howard water plan.

But Mr Bracks insisted the scheme was ill-conceived because the commonwealth still didn't know which constitutional powers they wanted the states to give up.

"They say they don't know. 'Just transfer the lot. Those that we don't need we'll transfer back to you'," Mr Bracks said.

"For goodness sake, poor policy will be found out eventually."

The Victorian premier also warned the federal government an agreement on a carbon emissions trading scheme was a priority.

"If there is not an emissions trading scheme in place by May of this year, when the prime minister receives his report from his own taskforce then we will proceed unilaterally."

The states had prepared legislation they could introduce next year to get such a scheme going by 2010, he said.

"Our preference is to have a national scheme with the Australian government a part of it.

"If that's not the case, we will proceed, giving certainty to industry, pricing carbon properly, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and doing the job required, we believe, of a national government to make sure that we deal with climate change."

But Mr Bracks had some good news for Mr Howard, showing enthusiasm for the prime minister's push for the states to move faster on cutting red tape.

The Victorian premier gave a cautious approval to Mr Howard's offer to fund uniform regulatory schemes in return for the states giving up rights in areas such as consumer product safety and personal properties security.

"We're happy to work with the prime minister on the proposals. Once we see the details I'll certainly be happy to help prosecute that case." - *AAP*

Consensus on emissions trading 'unlikely'

Agreement between the federal and state governments on an emissions trading scheme is unlikely to emerge from tomorrow's COAG meeting, Prime Minister John Howard says.

Mr Howard said today the key driver for an emissions trading scheme, a government task group chaired by the secretary of the prime minister's department and including industry representatives, was still examining options. "I always want practical outcomes that deliver benefits for people rather than high-blown statements with a tinge of religious fervour," he told reporters ahead of his meeting with the premiers at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting in Canberra.

"It is important that we actually try and deliver some outcomes.

"You say will emissions trading be closer this time tomorrow afternoon?

"The determinant in relation to emissions trading in the near future clearly has to be the outcome of the task group."

The COAG talks appear headed for conflict with rows brewing over ports congestion, climate change and a \$7 billion demand from the states for a national reform agenda.

The state premiers have all backed an emissions trading scheme, but Mr Howard said he continued to oppose any target for cutting emissions which would hurt the economy and jobs.

"I will embrace policies that make a contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in a proportionate, measured way that don't destroy Australian jobs, particularly in the coal industry," he said.

Mr Howard said he found it amazing that Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd committed Labor to a target for emissions reductions then declared he would get somebody to explain just how difficult the problem was.

"If you don't know how difficult it is, how on earth can you responsibly commit yourself to a target?" he said.

"What I have said, and I stand by it, is there is a place for a carbon price. What that should be is something that in the Australian situation will emerge in part from the task group that is now doing its work."

Mr Howard said that would also pay some regard to what was happening overseas.

"We also have to have regard to our economic position. I am not going to embrace policies that damage the Australian economy and destroy jobs," he said. - *AAP*

Adelaide Advertiser

ENVIRONMENT: Rudd looks at bigger picture

Whilst Federal Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd is doing his bit for the environment on the home front, he would like to do more for the Nation.

13th

FarmOnLine

ANZAC Day crunch time for rain: folklore confirmed

Over 80pc of the autumn seasonal breaks, with good rain, arrive by the end of April at Hamilton, Vic, and 80pc by the middle of May in Edenhope, Victoria.

The figures come from Vic Department of Primary Industry research.

Daily rainfall and temperature records since 1880 in the Hamilton and Edenhope districts were collected and combined with simulations from the CSIRO developed GrassGro computer model.

"The figures confirm that the probability of effective rainfall over the next four weeks is very high," Hamilton consultant Graham Lean says.

"So it is important to hold the line and keep feeding sheep because the chances are that this, hopefully, will be just a very bad memory in a few weeks time,"

As frustration and overdrafts build with every cloudless sky, farmers should take heart from these historical statistics.

After feeding hungry stock for six months or more, many have spent \$20 to \$30 per head keeping stock alive and also some in a condition enough, to be joined and productive this year.

Many are questioning just how much longer they can afford to keep feeding stock, with forced sales continuing.

Many older farmers can recall the 1967 drought breaking on ANZAC day, after ferocious dust storms whipped across many parts of the state.

Dr Lean says, "The median day of the break for Hamilton is April 8 and for Edenhope it is April 25.

"Although we have been a bit off that in recent years, the averages usually win out in the end."

SOURCE: Extract from report in *Stock & Land*, Vic, April 12.

The Australian

Premiers hit PM on climate, reforms

THE premiers have moved to corner John Howard with an aggressive plan to tackle climate change and use \$3 billion of their own funds to kickstart national reform and revive productivity.

43.

In a move that intensifies pressure on the Prime Minister, the states yesterday agreed to cut greenhouse emissions by 60 per cent by 2050.

The decision to embrace firm targets pushes the states into line with Kevin Rudd and the Business Council of Australia, but risks alienating the coal industry.

Ahead of today's Council of Australian Governments meeting, the premiers were last night pressing for the commonwealth to inject \$7 billion into a new national reform agenda.

Determined to make progress on key reforms, the states told Mr Howard they were willing to inject \$3 billion to boost literacy and numeracy, and cut the rate of diabetes.

Commonwealth sources said Mr Howard would reject the demands for \$7 billion, amid suspicions that the states were more interested in helping Mr Rudd's election campaign than in serious reform.

Yesterday's decision by the premiers to back Mr Rudd on emissions targets followed a decision by Queensland and Western Australia to ditch their reluctance on the issue, but the two states played down concerns that the move could cost thousands of jobs in the coal sector.

Both states rely heavily on the resources sector, particularly coal.

Queensland Premier Peter Beattie said he had opposed setting emissions targets but had been convinced because of the seriousness of global warming.

"There's enough lead time for adjustments to move jobs into other sectors, and emissions trading and clean coal technology will help," he said last night.

"The planet is in such a state that we can't muck around."

South Australian Premier Mike Rann remained confident that broad agreement could be reached on climate change, including on kickstarting a national emissions trading scheme by 2010.

"We know there is further work to be done on the details of the scheme," he said.

"But putting in clear targets for achieving its introduction will ensure we get the scheme up and running as soon as possible."

Mr Howard maintained his opposition to setting targets, placing him on a collision course with the states and federal Labor.

"I, as always, want practical outcomes that deliver benefits for people rather than high-blown statements with a tinge of religious fervour," he said.

Taking aim at Labor's targets agenda, he said: "I'll embrace policies that make a contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in a proportionate, measured way that doesn't destroy Australian jobs, particularly in the coal industry."

Today's summit will be the last before the federal election. While recent COAG meetings have been characterised by mutual back-slapping, the states and Mr Howard now appear poles apart on funding arrangements and policy direction.

The states' reform push involves asking Mr Howard for \$4.5 billion of commonwealth funding to be used as part of a bigger pool to improve literacy and numeracy standards and cut the level of type 2 diabetes.

The states would put in \$3 billion over four years.

They are demanding a further \$2.5 billion of commonwealth funds to provide "incentive payments" for the states to embark on competition reforms including energy and transport market measures and more efficient regulation of crucial infrastructure such as ports. *Additional reporting: Dennis Shanahan*

Plan to pump water interstate slammed

Malcolm Turnbull has backed a plan to pipe water from northern NSW to southeast Queensland, despite having no definitive research on the likely carbon emissions required to provide the massive amounts of energy to run the scheme.

Initial estimates suggest that water supplied to southeast Queensland under the federal Environment Minister's plan would cost up to twice as much as the current cost of pumping water from the region's supplies.

Mr Turnbull yesterday rushed the release of a report that argues major northern NSW rivers could be dammed and water piped to southeast Queensland. Four of the options involve damming NSW's Clarence River and piping water to the Logan River in Queensland. Another option involves a dam on the Tweed River.

Mr Turnbull called on the states to commit money to the project and foreshadowed significant commonwealth funding. An early assessment by one water expert said implementing the plan could create annual greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to putting a further 45,000 cars on the road.

Water experts, environment groups and Labor criticised the lack of detail about the energy implications in the report. The Australian understands it could take years for the environmental and social impacts of the proposal to be established. The Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation, the author of the report, has suggested a hydroelectric station could be established along the route of the pipeline to recoup some of the massive energy costs associated with pumping water long distances.

44.

Water is expensive to transport because it is so heavy: one kilolitre weighs a tonne. The report acknowledges that key financial calculations were rushed and incomplete.

Stuart White, director of the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney, said the piping scheme was foolish.

"It is unnecessary and a very expensive way to supply water to southeast Queensland," Professor White said.

Pumping the water could create about 200,000 tonnes of emissions each year, he said.

The SMEC report - which relies on existing publications, two of which are more than 25 years old - calls for a series of new reports before a thorough feasibility study.

Mr Turnbull lambasted Queensland Premier Peter Beattie for failing to consider the "national" project ahead of the controversial Traveston Dam, which will be the subject of Senate committee hearings next week.

"Mr Beattie and the other Labor premiers are very fond of talking about how closely they work together and their co-operation," Mr Turnbull said.

"Here is an opportunity for them to show us that these two Labor states can co-operate."

He noted the NSW Government had refused to help prepare the report.

Mr Beattie said he was open to any proposal to improve his state's water supply but doubted Mr Turnbull had engaged in any detailed planning.

"This is a desk-top plan with no detail," Mr Beattie said. "It's about politics, not water."

NSW Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water Phil Koperberg said Mr Turnbull was using a report that was "full of holes".

Insurers want a map of the future

Reliable information on changing weather, water flows and coastal and inland erosion patterns will be vital for the insurance industry to plan for the effects of climate change.

The industry's peak body yesterday welcomed proposals - to be presented to the Council of Australian Governments meeting in Canberra today - for mapping and modelling rainfalls, runoff and sea levels.

The \$345million, five-year framework includes the creation of an Australian Centre for Climate Change Adaptation, research programs to identify gaps in knowledge about the effect of climate change on water, and a fisheries study.

Although much of the debate on climate change has centred on the difficult task of reducing carbon emissions, all levels of government agreed that adapting to changes, particularly in water management, was unavoidable. South Australian Premier Mike Rann, who has taken charge of the creation of the climate change discussion paper, said it was important for COAG to provide a road map for how Australians will have to adapt to changes in the continent's climate.

"However much we move to lower carbon emissions, we must accept that we are faced with decades of climate change due to the emissions already in the atmosphere," Mr Rann said.

The insurance industry is looking forward to the initiatives, saying flood mapping in particular was vitally important in coping with risk.

Some companies, such as the Insurance Australia Group and Swiss Re have already argued for aggressive measures by government and the community to deal with climate change.

They warn premiums will rise as weather becomes more extreme and sea levels rise.

IAG, in its submission to the Prime Minister's Task Group on Emissions Trading, says it has a strong interest in reducing greenhouse-gas emissions "due to the impact of severe climatic events on property, and the resultant insurance claims costs and premium affordability".

The company backs a target for Australia of reducing emissions by 60 per cent by 2050, saying strong action now will ensure economic growth remains at least 2.1 per cent in the middle of the century and that an additional 250,000 jobs are created.

Map to spotlight climate hotspots

A \$300 million-plus project to map the impact of climate change on coastal areas and farmlands will be considered by national leaders on Friday.

John Howard has told the premiers he wants a "wide-ranging discussion" on climate change at the Council of Australian Governments summit, including on a potential national emissions trading scheme.

But the Prime Minister and the premiers will also consider a major report that suggests an urgent scoping study be undertaken into the nation's ability to adapt to climate change.

A digital map likely to form part of a bigger project will pinpoint coastal communities that face being washed away by rising sea levels, identifying roads, homes, businesses and transport and port facilities in danger of being submerged.

Under the COAG plan, scientists and environmental consultants would examine in detail how climate change will affect particularly vulnerable regions, such as far north Queensland.

45.

They will also assess the impact on Australia's farmers and other agricultural producers whose businesses could be severely harmed by global warming.

The Australian has been told by state officials that expenditure on the project could be more than \$300 million over seven years. However, the commonwealth last night disputed the scoping study would cost that much.

One senior official familiar with the confidential report said it would recommend a series of research projects be undertaken. It would examine the likely impact of global warming on particular crops, and assess marginal farming lands that might become unviable if doomsday scenarios became reality.

The push by national leaders to examine the impact of global warming comes after a high-level UN taskforce warned on Friday that one-third of the world's plants and animals face extinction if global temperatures continue to rise. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change also forecast a grim future for the Great Barrier Reef and Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory if action were not taken.

Under pressure to agree to a \$7 billion national reform agenda put forward by the states, Mr Howard has told the premiers he wants to put climate change high on the COAG agenda.

Friday's meeting provides the opportunity for a "broader discussion on climate change", he said.

"To this end, I am proposing that climate change be accorded an agenda item in its own right which would enable us to have a wide-ranging discussion on this important matter, including an update on the progress of my Emissions Trading Task Group, as well as consider the reports that we previously requested," Mr Howard told the premiers, in his COAG letter.

Scientists have already begun work on the digital map of Australia's coastline to help pinpoint communities that face being washed away by rising sea levels. The federal Government's Australian Greenhouse Office is co-ordinating dozens of scientists to take part in the project amid fears about dramatic rises in sea levels that climate change could trigger.

A climate change business risk analyst, Karl Mallon, yesterday told a Sydney forum the cash value of a home would be cut by up to 80 per cent if it were deemed uninsurable for a severe weather event caused by global warming.

The COAG project, which has been driven by South Australian Premier Mike Rann, is likely to include the map and will provide crucial information for the plan to look at increasing agriculture in the water-rich north of Australia.

Mapping will be crucial to help predict where rivers will run and what potential farmland will open up in the now drier parts of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. The increased rain in the north of Queensland will, however, come at the cost to the southeast corner, already struggling in the drought.

While climate change will be a core agenda issue, the premiers also want Mr Howard to endorse a 10-point national reform plan covering key health, education and regulatory obstacles to improving productivity, which they say will cost Canberra more than \$7 billion over five years.

The eight state and territory leaders, all Labor, said Friday's meeting "represents a historic opportunity for us to announce the beginning of a long-term reform agenda to secure future prosperity".

The leaders, who will discuss their plans with Mr Howard tomorrow night at The Lodge ahead of Friday's COAG meeting, said they had agreed to "dozens of specific policy measures".

These include a commitment to nationally consistent teaching standards - an area of reform the states have traditionally been loath to tackle.

They also want COAG to sign off on new measures to boost literacy and numeracy, lift the level of childcare and cut red tape for business.

In their letter to Mr Howard, the premiers and chief ministers said the national reform agenda would only be possible "if all governments play their part and work together".

Mr Howard, who is expected to outline some initiatives of his own at Friday's meeting, responded cautiously to the states' demands.

He pointed out that Victorian Premier Steve Bracks, who has spearheaded the reform agenda, had so far refused to sign up to the \$10 billion blueprint for the Murray-Darling river system.

"I mean, I think it would be a good idea if we decided on the plan to spend the \$10 billion before we start talking about plans to spend another \$7 billion, although I note that because of the strong economy we have, the states imagine that there's large amounts of money available," Mr Howard said.

"But I want the meeting on Friday to be successful. I think we should all set about being quiet achievers in the interests of the Federation on Friday."

Queensland, NSW, the ACT and South Australia have already signed up to the Murray-Darling plan but Mr Howard said he was not making Victoria's acceptance a condition of broader COAG reforms.

"But it passes strange to me that a premier who is holding up consummation of a \$10 billion investment in Australia's water future should be moving on to telling us how we can spend another seven (billion)," he said.

46.

Along with climate change and a new national reform agenda, COAG will consider health, skills, indigenous affairs, counter-terrorism and local government funding issues.

Mr Bracks challenged the Prime Minister to put productivity ahead of politics.

"This is really D-Day for COAG and for federal and state governments," he said.

"We have been discussing and debating the national reform agenda, the third wave of reform, for at least the last five years. There is in-principle agreement on how to proceed, but we need ... funding in place, particularly for literacy and numeracy skills, for early childhood development and for fighting diabetes and obesity.

"We want the commonwealth to commit money now and not hoard money for an election campaign later in the year. Now is the time to pursue real reform outside the election cycle on work that's been undertaken for the past four or five years."

Mr Bracks - who was expected to talk privately with Mr Howard late yesterday - was speaking at a childcare centre in a visit designed to highlight his plan for early childhood development. *Additional reporting: Rick Wallace, AAP*

Herald Sun **Focus on climate change**

The Commonwealth will fund a climate change adaptation centre to inform the nation of the likely impact of global warming.

Speaking after today's meeting of the commonwealth and state and territory leaders, Prime Minister John Howard said climate change was discussed in detail with premiers outlining their proposal for a greenhouse gas emission cut of 60 per cent by 2050. Mr Howard said he repeated the government's unwillingness to commit to a reduction target because of the possible consequences on the economy, especially jobs. "We all agreed that adaptation to climate change was an important issue and I announced that the commonwealth would establish a national centre for climate change adaptation," he told reporters.

"That will cost \$26 million to establish and the commonwealth will invest \$100 million additionally in that centre to assist with its operations over the next five years."

Mr Howard said the CSIRO would also receive an extra \$44 million of commonwealth funds to research the science of the impact of climate change.

He said state contributions to this new centre would be welcome but the commonwealth would fund it regardless. "We think it is very important that the country be advised on the impact on our coastline and the impact on the atmosphere and the possible consequences for different sections of the population, the impact on rural Australia quite separately from water issues," he said.

Mr Howard said the states and the federal government had also come to agreements on funding for diabetes research, a national accreditation scheme for doctors, infrastructure issues and a literacy and numeracy proposal. He said the commonwealth would invest \$100 million up front into diabetes work, with that sum matched collectively by the states.

Victorian Premier Steve Bracks said today was a good day, but not a great day.

He said the states and territories came to the meeting with a 10-point plan for reforms, addressing climate change and a process for dealing with some of the ongoing reforms.

"Today was a good day, today was a day in which we achieved about 8.1 of the 10-point plan, but it could have been a great day," Mr Bracks said.

"It wasn't a great day because clearly there was an omission in relation to a significant addressing of climate change in this country, and the architecture for an emissions trading scheme that needs to be in place as soon as possible."

He said the states and territories want an emissions trading scheme operational by 2010, backed up by legislation in 2008.

"If we don't have that target, if we don't have that reporting, if we don't have that architecture in that timetable, we have missed the chance to address climate change in this country."

Queensland Premier Peter Beattie - hard hit by the ongoing Doctor Death scandal - especially welcomed the national accreditation scheme for doctors.

"To have a national system of accreditation is light years ahead of what we had," Mr Beattie said.

"This accreditation system is a very significant advance and I am delighted to have been at a COAG (meeting) that made that decision."

West Australian Premier Alan Carpenter said he was disappointed with the little that had been achieved on climate change.

"I don't think we are moving fast enough. I don't think the federal government is moving fast enough, with all due respect," Mr Carpenter said.

"The community, people, business, want us to move faster on climate change."

He said emissions targets and deadlines should be set to stimulate people into action.

New South Wales Premier Morris Iemma said the state would aim to meet a greenhouse reduction target despite the plan not having the support of the prime minister.

"We've re-affirmed our commitment to greenhouse reduction targets and we accept the prime minister's difference of opinion on the work of targets," he said.

Mr Iemma welcomed a move for a national accreditation scheme for doctors.

"Today we've made a step towards a more national health system," he said.

"This is ensuring that, one, we have sufficient health professionals to continue to provide top quality services for our hospitals, for our citizens, and, secondly, the flexibility in the system to ensure that the professional boundaries around each of the categories of health professionals can adapt to change of circumstances and the health needs of our citizens particularly in remote and rural areas."

Adelaide Advertiser

Global warming 'no fault of ours'

Claims by an Adelaide professor that climate change could not have been driven by humans have drawn sharp criticism from the scientific community.

University of Adelaide mining engineering Professor Ian Plimer says the climate is a complicated system ruled by the Sun and the Earth's orbit, and that "the forces that we humans exert on this planet are miniscule".

"Unless we humans have the ability to change the orbit of the Earth or the cycles of the Sun, we will be approaching the next inevitable cold climate cycle . . . within decades," he said.

The climate was driven more by solar activity than carbon dioxide emissions.

Professor Plimer has sparked fresh debate on climate change with his comments to the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy on Wednesday.

But they have come under fire from world-renowned climate scientist and Honorary Research Fellow at Monash University, Dr Graeme Pearman.

"By and large the scientific community is fed up with this kind of stuff," he said.

"The right place for him to make these arguments is in scientific literature."

Dr Pearman said scientists "all agree climate of the world has changed over long time scales", but that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had concluded that variations in solar radiation had a much smaller impact on the current climate than greenhouse gases had.

University of Adelaide climate change Professor Barry Brook said Professor Plimer had a distinguished record in mining geology, but had not published on climate change.

Professor Brook said the vast majority of scientific experts considered global warming to be real and to be caused by human pollution.

Murray booms in place

SA Water has installed booms on the River Murray to prevent algae from entering its pumping systems.

The booms have been attached as a precaution to protect pumps at Renmark, Cobdogla, Kingston-on-Murray and Swan Reach to safeguard the quality of Adelaide's water supply. Low flows combined with hot weather can increase the risk of algal blooms in the waterway. The booms will remain in place until the risk of an algae outbreak is reduced.

Libs to focus on water

Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith has ordered the development of a new water security strategy for Adelaide.

National climate change action needed

Federal Government inaction on climate change is stunting State and Local Government efforts to reduce carbon emissions, according to an environmental public policy expert arriving in Adelaide today. **He's just arrived and already blaming State and Local Government inaction on the Federal Government.**

Peter Cosier, a member of the Wentworth Group of Scientists, yesterday told the Advertiser that until the Federal Government "puts a price on carbon" there is only so much the rest of Australia can do to tackle 'climate change'. **That doesn't mean the State & Local Government can not start now.**

Murray booms in place

SA Water has installed booms on the River Murray to prevent algae from entering its pumping systems.

14th

Adelaide Advertiser

Murray's flow hits a new low

The River Murray's flow into SA has dropped to its lowest level since 1979.

In the past week, the flow has been about 1700ML/day, which has contributed to further water level reductions in the lower lakes. The water level in Lakes Alexandrina and Albert is now 0.13m above sea level.

48.

The latest River Murray figures came after Government, university and local experts met in Strathalbyn yesterday for the community symposium, All About Water, All About the River.

Co-convenor Diane Bell said the major concern raised was that Adelaide residents had "no idea" of the effect the lack of water was having at the end of the Murray. Courier Mail

Oops on water figures

The Water Commission last night admitted it was settling for a daily usage limit well above its much-publicised 140-litre-a-day target.

Latest figures show southeast Queenslanders are still using much more water a day than they should to meet the target. And the commission yesterday conceded it did not expect that goal to be achieved immediately. It said the community would guide it on when "Target 140" could be met.

Just before level 5 restrictions came into force on Tuesday the region was guzzling an average of about 700 megalitres a day. Since then the lowest usage was 635ML on Thursday. To get to the target of 140 litres per person, consumption would have to nosedive to 550ML.

Water Commissioner Elizabeth Nosworthy said she did not expect residents to meet the 550ML target at the beginning of the water-saving campaign. She said the commission had an April goal of 635ML a day, which was nearly met in the first three days of level 5 – the equivalent of about 170 litres per person a day.

"This is a very good start. Obviously we have further to go," she said.

Gold Coast Mayor Ron Clarke said the 550ML goal would be hard to meet. "It's a big ask, that's for sure," he said.

Caboolture Mayor Joy Leishman said the region was in uncharted waters and no one knew whether a personal target of 140 litres a day was attainable.

"We've never had a capital city have to get down to these low numbers," she said.

Questions first arose yesterday about the savings necessary under the Target 140 campaign.

Commission CEO John Bradley said three weeks ago that the region would have to achieve 630ML a day, but the commission yesterday adjusted the number to 550ML.

The commission is counting on large savings from a mail-out of warning letters next month to people using more than 800 litres a day.

The Australian

Howard warms to targets

A National emissions trading scheme appears certain after John Howard signalled he was prepared to accept targets to cut greenhouse gases.

Asked what sort of trading scheme he wanted, the Prime Minister told The Weekend Australian yesterday: "It will be credible - but cautious."

The move towards a national scheme came after the states criticised the commonwealth for not doing enough on climate change - certain to be one of the key election issues - and threw their support behind Kevin Rudd's ambitious target of a 60 per cent cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

But Mr Howard, who has firmly rejected the federal Opposition Leader's target, emerged from a three-hour Council of Australian Governments summit to announce a range of other measures to tackle climate change, and improve health standards.

The COAG meeting signed off on a \$170 million national project to examine the impact of global warming on Australia. It will consider the effect rising seas will have on coastal areas, along with the effects of global warming on plants and animals.

The leaders also backed a \$200million plan to tackle the "epidemic" of diabetes, with 100,000 new cases being reported every year.

While the premiers' summit was more harmonious than expected, there was no agreement on a national response to climate change.

This was despite the states agreeing on Thursday to forge a united front to cut greenhouse gases.

Amid concerns in Canberra that the states are trying to help Mr Rudd's election prospects, the premiers have now backed a 60 per cent cut in carbon emissions by 2050.

They want legislation passed by the end of next year in order to have a national emissions trading scheme - which would allow polluters to buy and sell rights to emit greenhouse gases - running by 2010.

Mr Howard reaffirmed his opposition to the states' target but insisted he was not against cutting targets "generically".

A political fault line has emerged over the climate change issue, with federal Labor committed to the more ambitious target - but Mr Howard said he would not embrace targets that would harm the economy and destroy jobs.

"But that doesn't mean to say that you forever say there are no targets," he told journalists. "It depends on their levels and it depends on your understanding of their impact."

A task group, headed by Mr Howard's most senior public service adviser, Peter Shergold, will report on a potential national emissions trading scheme by late next month.

But the states told Mr Howard yesterday he should be moving faster to introduce a national emissions trading scheme.

Victorian Premier Steve Bracks lamented the lack of action: "Today was a good day but it could have been a great day," he said. "Clearly there was an omission of a significant addressing of climate change in this country and the architecture for an emissions trading scheme, which needs to be in place as soon as possible."

The states are urging the commonwealth to move quickly, arguing that it will take two years to build the database necessary for a national trading scheme.

South Australian Premier Mike Rann said governments were "flying blind" without having rigorous targets in place.

Queensland Premier Peter Beattie, who risks a backlash from his state's coal industry after embracing the 60 per cent target, told Mr Howard the states wanted to deal with Canberra.

The Prime Minister defended his more cautious approach, arguing that he was placing employment and the economy "above everything else".

"Jobs and economic prosperity is more important than ideology and particular targets," he said. "But that doesn't mean you forever say there are no targets - it depends what their level is and then what their level of impact is."

While national leaders did not reach agreement on climate change, the states failed in their efforts to secure \$7 billion from Canberra to fund a new package of national reform.

In what will be the final COAG before the federal election, the leaders backed a national roll-out of electricity smart meters. However, Mr Rann raised concerns about the cost-effectiveness of this plan in his state.

Among other measures, the leaders agreed to establish a national energy market operator for electricity and gas. And they pledged \$40 million over four years for indigenous education in rural areas.

Adelaide Advertiser

\$170m for climate change strategy

Prime Minister John Howard has committed \$170 million to a new climate change adaptation strategy, including a new \$126 million centre to examine global warming effects already underway.

But while the new money represented a win for Premier Mike Rann – who advocated the proposal, it came at the expense of broader action on the environment.

A concerted push to establish ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets and a national emissions trading scheme was rejected yesterday. The states had wanted agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent of 2000 levels by 2050 and to commit to a national emissions trading scheme to be up and running by 2010.

However, Mr Howard argued his own Emissions Trading Task Group was due to report in May and to act before then would have been inappropriate.

"They will produce a very valuable report at the end of next month," he said.

But in another sign the Federal Government was repositioning on the issue, Mr Howard moved to clarify his views on emissions targets. "I have stated my reservations about certain targets, not about targets generically," he said.

Mr Rann said he was pleased with the climate adaptation initiative.

"It is critical that the science of climate change already in the system be conducted because, whatever else we do to reduce emissions, global warming is a fact of life and it will have profound effects," he said.

The states went into the meeting advocating what they called a new national reform agenda emphasising a "human capital" approach to a range of issues, including, childcare, early childhood development, type 2 diabetes, and other issues.

Victorian Premier Steve Bracks had argued for a third wave of reform and asked Mr Howard to commit \$7 billion to the range of proposals.

That claim was rejected, although Mr Bracks said it had been a "good meeting" that had agreed to put the "architecture" for the new reform agenda in place if not the money.

Natural gas is 'greener'

Australia could avoid producing more than a quarter of its projected greenhouse gas emissions in 10 years if energy policy was reformed in favour of natural gas use, an industry body says.

15th

adelaidenow.com

Water cuts to get tougher

Householders are headed for tough new water restrictions – including a total ban on garden sprinklers and washing cars – as the crucial flow of River Murray water into South Australia continues to fall.

50.

The State Government said it was preparing tough new water use restrictions which, if needed, would be introduced on July 1.

It also was planning restrictions for businesses for the first time.

"These plans are based on a worse case scenario – which is exactly the way things are heading at the moment," Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald said.

"Each month since October last year has seen River Murray inflows to the state at their lowest level in 116 years – and every day without rain increases the likelihood of severe restrictions being introduced."

Government projections show water consumption will exceed supply this year unless the drought breaks – and the Bureau of Meteorology predicts there is only a 50 per cent chance of average rainfall in autumn and winter this year.

Eastern state capitals have already adopted severe restrictions banning the use of sprinklers and washing cars, and the SA Government said it was looking to do the same.

"We will pull bits and pieces from each of the other states' existing restrictions," Ms Maywald said.

"For example, new restrictions would see no outside watering with sprinklers and a ban on washing cars would also be considered."

Under present Level 3 restrictions cars can be washed using a bucket, and sprinkler use is restricted to once a week.

Other existing interstate restrictions being considered by the Government include:

GARDENS watered by bucket or watering cans only – no hoses.

CAR cleaning with water restricted to mirrors, windows, lights and number plates

SWIMMING pools only topped up if the owner has a pool cover and water-efficient toilet, washing machine and showerhead.

HIGH household water users being audited by water authorities to identify ways to reduce consumption.

REGULATIONS requiring industry, big businesses and government departments to adopt water efficiency strategies to reduce consumption by up to 25 per cent.

Ms Maywald said she was looking at having "severe" new restrictions finalised and presented to Cabinet by June. An announcement of new restrictions would be made by mid-June to allow householders to prepare for their introduction on July 1.

As well as falling River Murray flows – dropping to 1300 megalitres a day compared with a 4500 megalitre autumn average – this month's unseasonably hot weather is also driving the need for further restrictions.

Adelaide has not recorded any rain this month. The April average is 39.5mm.

And there is no rainfall on the radar, according to the latest Bureau of Meteorology forecast, which predicts Adelaide temperatures in the high 20s and low 30s at least until Thursday.

Ms Maywald urged people to help conserve water and save money by taking advantage of rebates offered on water-efficient devices bought for the home.

16th April

FarmOnLine

Bracks won't budge in Vic water stand off

There was no discussion of the Federal Government's \$10 billion plan for water, or Victoria's refusal to sign up to the agreement, at today's Coalition of Australian Government's meeting agenda.

Victorian Premier Steve Bracks says the issue was not discussed because it was not on the agenda.

Mr Bracks told a media conference today there was no opportunity to discuss Victoria's outstanding concerns with the plan.

Victoria remains the only State of the four Murray Darling States not to cede its control of water to the Commonwealth. While the Victorian Nationals have received assurances from the Minister for Environment and Water Resources, Malcolm Turnbull, on water entitlements for the State's farmers, Mr Bracks was adamant he would not sign the deal in its current form.

But Deputy Prime Minister, Mark Vaile, says Mr Bracks is now totally isolated on the water debate, saying he is "out of step with the wishes of the rest of the country".

"Water required for wealth in our regional communities has, for too long, been taken for granted and suffered from a lack of investment," Mr Vaile said.

"We now have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to inject a huge amount of money into water infrastructure for regional communities, thanks to the Australian Government's sound economic management." SOURCE: Rural Press National News Service, Parliament House Bureau, Canberra.

Cross-border water pipeline idea angers NSW

The Federal Government has been warned it will have a fight on its hands over any proposal to pump water from northern NSW rivers to Queensland's drought stricken southeast.

Federal Water Resources Minister Malcolm Turnbull is releasing a report in Brisbane which concludes a cross-border pipeline would be a cost-effective option to easing the region's water woes.

The report, prepared by the Snowy Mountains Energy Corporation for the National Water Commission, will outline five options for transporting water across the border. Four of the options include damming NSW's Clarence River and piping it to the Logan River in Queensland. The fifth option involves damming the Tweed River to pump water to the Nerang River. The report comes only days after tough new level five water restrictions were introduced in southeast Queensland. However, Clarence Valley Mayor, Ian Tiley, says any plan to dam the Clarence River will be destructive.

He says local residents will fight to protect the waterway.

"If there's one issue that unites the vast majority of the Clarence people, it's the mighty Clarence River," he said.

"And the council, and I believe the vast majority of people in this valley, are totally opposed to (the plan)."

NSW Nationals MP for Clarence, Steve Cansdell, says Mr Turnbull would have a fight on his hands if the Clarence proposal goes any further.

"Malcolm Turnbull should get in a kayak and go up the Clarence ... and just have a look and see the pristine nature of this and the delicate nature of our water system," he said.

"I thought Malcolm Turnbull was a lot smarter than that. We should be looking at 21st century technology."

However, Queensland Opposition Leader Jeff Seeney says any option which will prevent the southeast corner from running out of water should be considered on its merits.

"The Beattie Labour government should have been considering options like the northern river proposal years ago, when this water crisis first reared its head," he said.

"The northern river proposal is talking about piping water over a much shorter distance than the Traveston proposal, so it is likely to be much more cost effective."

The Queensland government's proposed Traveston Crossing Dam, near Gympie, north of Brisbane, will cost \$1.7 billion and the first stage of the project is expected to be completed by the end of 2011. Mr Seeney said the government was also spending millions of dollars considering piping water from north Queensland - a proposal known as the Bradfield scheme - but had not been willing to look at sourcing water from its own doorstep in northern NSW. "We need to start taking a regional approach towards water, not just a local one," he said.

SOURCE: AAP and *FarmOnline*.

Vic Nationals back Feds water plan

The Victorian Nationals has broken with the widespread opposition in that State to the Federal Government's water plan, after negotiating a series of concessions from Water Minister Malcolm Turnbull.

The Nationals' Leader in Victoria, Peter Ryan, announced the shift after five weeks of negotiations with Mr Turnbull.

The move places new pressure on Labour Premier Steve Bracks to follow suit at today's COAG meeting in Canberra.

Mr Ryan says negotiations centred on a number of initial concerns with the original plan, including:

- the governance of the proposed Murray Darling Basin Authority;
- on-going security of Victorian irrigators' water entitlements; and
- the risk that water generated as a result of investment in water savings would be diverted to Melbourne rather than being available for irrigators' future security.

"The Victorian Nationals have secured a written undertaking from the Commonwealth in relation to these and other matters," Mr Ryan said. "Mr Turnbull has assured The Nationals that under the Commonwealth plan water will not be compulsorily acquired from irrigators.

"Mr Turnbull has also recognised the potential impact of unrestrained trade in water entitlements and has accepted. The Nationals' proposal that the 4pc cap on annual permanent trade from irrigation districts be maintained until the scheduled review, whereas the Victorian Government presently intends that there be open trade from the first of July this year.

"Furthermore, and of critical significance, is the fact that existing Victorian legislation ensures there will be no review of Victorian irrigators' entitlements until at least 2019. The National Water Plan will honour these arrangements."

Mr Ryan says the Commonwealth has also undertaken to meet all charges and fees associated with the supply of environmental water entitlements.

"This is extremely important for irrigators who are otherwise faced with the burden of escalating costs associated with the provision of environmental flows," he said.

"The environment has to pay its way. "It is also in contrast to Victorian arrangements where the Government has refused to give a similar undertaking in relation to meeting the cost of providing environmental water." SOURCE: *Stock & Land*, weekly rural newspaper, Victoria.

A State-based emissions trading scheme has been rejected by business chiefs and the energy supply industry on the grounds it would undermine the \$75billion infrastructure investment needed to deliver lower emissions and would isolate Australia from future global trading regimes.

Labor premiers have committed to a state emissions trading regime from next year, after no agreement was reached on a policy response to climate change at Friday's Council of Australian Governments meeting.

The Business Council of Australia urged the states yesterday to wait for the Howard Government's response to the findings of its emissions-trading task group next month, and to then work with Canberra on a national trading regime.

"It's critical we take a consistent approach to the challenge of climate change so our response is as effective as possible without harming our natural economic advantages," BCA spokesman Scott Thompson said yesterday.

"The approach by the states is bad policy because it amounts to a fragmented response that is not comprehensive and therefore provides little investment certainty," he said.

Energy Supply Association chief executive Brad Page said the states' proposed scheme was too narrow and the combined eight jurisdictions did not have the authority to commit to future international trading schemes.

International negotiations on a post-Kyoto framework for 2012 are expected to intensify with the involvement of major emitters such as the US and China central to the effectiveness of any future emissions reduction program.

"The states do not have the constitutional authority to enter into any form of international protocol and therefore could quickly see their scheme stranded and inconsistent with any future international arrangements, which would leave the industry highly exposed," Mr Page said.

He said he did not support the states' scheme, which consisted of trading for electricity emissions and did not include two-thirds of Australia's greenhouse emissions from sectors such as agriculture and transport.

"We do not have confidence that at the end of the day the eight jurisdictions will be able to set aside their competing state interests and have a single national set of arrangements that will apply regardless of the jurisdiction the facilities are in," Mr Page said.

Following the COAG meeting, South Australian Premier Mike Rann said the states and territories would move to put in place the necessary legislation by next year with a view to getting a trading regime running by 2010.

John Howard has not ruled out setting targets and a trading regime to achieve them, but the Prime Minister is waiting on the report of his business-led emissions-trading task group on May 31 before moving.

Global emissions targets and trading will be a central feature of the third report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on May 4.

The draft summary chapter is expected to be rewritten when the third working group of the IPCC meets in Bangkok next week.

Australia warned not to pin hopes on clean coal

US-based billionaire venture capitalist Vinod Khosla has slammed Australia for pinning its climate change hopes on clean-coal technology.

Mr Khosla, the Indian-born co-founder of Sun Microsystems and a prominent Silicon Valley identity, said clean coal was too expensive and would cost Australia its industrial development.

"Most of the attempts at clean coal are half-hearted and very far away," he told ABC's Four Corners program. "I suspect when we get there we will find those technologies ... are very expensive."

He said Australia needed to invest in alternatives such as solar thermal energy. "I believe if you're going to do something about climate change we need technologies that can be more cost-effective than clean-coal technologies," he said. "And solar thermal is one of the most promising areas to do that."

Mr Khosla said Australia relied too heavily on its abundant coal resources and said reliance would leave the country behind in the energy race.

AWA

Water Minister Malcolm Turnbull released a report by SMEC and Hassall, which identified projects to extract at least 50,000 ML of water per year from northeastern rivers of NSW to meet future water demands of SE QLD and NE NSW.

The GNANGARA Mound, the aquifer that supplies more than half of Perth's drinking water and much of the city's irrigation, is drying up after years of overuse. WA's EPA has accused Government of failing to heed years of warnings on risks of over abstraction.

The Economic Regulatory Authority in WA has launched a new, user-friendly web site at ([Website](#)). This includes improved search and navigation facilities.

Kevin Hunt GM of the Municipal Water District of Orange County says we need to plan for the value of water and not the cost of it; and residents of St Helens on Tasmania's east coast are calling on state and local governments to properly assess their water supply after it was found to contain pesticides.

Mid-Coast Water and NSW Department of Health have signed an MOU that establishes a joint strategic group and a joint operational group, with representatives from both organisations, as well as plans and protocols for dealing with water related events of Public Health significance.

Scientists have found that different varieties of wheat have different ways of dealing with Salinity and while wheat may not be quite as salt loving as mangroves, it has a higher tolerance to salinity than previously realised with implications for cereal growers in dealing with saline soil problems.

Australian scientists who contributed to the latest global greenhouse study say the Great Barrier Reef is one of the nation's great assets most at risk under climate change as a result of rising sea temperatures, which cause mass coral die-offs due to bleaching, and the gradual acidifying of the oceans from CO₂ in the atmosphere, which prevents corals from forming their limestone skeletons.

US EPA has begun the formal process to establish a panel of stakeholders to develop the revised Total Coliform Rule, which is expected to include additional requirements to improve control of microbial contaminants in distribution systems.

Department of Natural Resources and Parks for King County, Washington, has awarded GE Water & Process Technologies, a unit of General Electric Company, the Green Globe Award for outstanding achievement in the category of Leader in Reclaimed Water.

The 2007 annual report on China's Yangtze River protection and development shows that >600 Km are in critical condition, almost 30% of its major tributaries, including the Minjiang, Tuojiang, Xiangjiang and Huangpu rivers, are seriously polluted and this is having a major impact on survival of aquatic life. A separate study from the Yangtze River Water Resources Commission shows cities along the river discharge at least 14.2 billion tons of polluted water/ year (42% China's total).

There are concerns for the Prime Minister's \$10B water plan, including concerns about timing and review of draft Commonwealth legislation, which highlight its lack of detail.

A \$3 billion desalination plant at Bribie Island could supply Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast and Ipswich in a water supply emergency according to a KBR Report for DNR Queensland.

An expert panel is investigating options for the Bracks government as it is tipped that one of the world's biggest water desalination plants could be built in Victoria as efforts to drought-proof Melbourne gather pace.

Water scarcity poses the biggest threat to Australia from climate change according to Bureau of Meteorology director Dr Geoff Love, who contributed to the latest UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report because water was our key resource under threat.

Lead pollution in popular swimming areas along Mt Isa's Leichhardt River is hundreds of times higher than government limits.

CSIRO has denied that its scientific assessment of sustainable water use in the Murray-Darling Basin will determine crucial water allocations under the PM's \$10bill water plan.

A plan to pipe water from northern NSW to southeast Queensland has received mixed responses but has no definitive research on the likely carbon emissions required to provide the massive amounts of energy to run the scheme.

couriermail.com.au

Bribie best for desal plant

The world's biggest desalination plant should be built north of Brisbane to drought-proof southeast Queensland, a report commissioned by the Beattie Government recommends.

The report says the plant would supply water to Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast and Ipswich in a water supply emergency.

It assumes the plant – likely to cost at least \$3 billion – would still be needed to cope with future drought even if all new water supply facilities planned by the Government, including the controversial Traveston Crossing dam, go ahead.

The September 2006 report, by engineering consultants Kellogg, Brown and Root, was commissioned by the Department of Natural Resources and Water.

The Courier-Mail obtained it under Freedom of Information laws.

It is one of several reports in Government hands that recommend a second desalination plant for the region, with most preferring a site on Bribie Island.

The KBR report says it assessed the northern site in terms of such a plant delivering 400 million litres a day of desalinated seawater. The world's biggest existing desalination plant, Israel's Ashkelon facility, produces 320 million litres a day.

The Government has previously played down the need for such a plant to be built at Bribie Island, saying it had environmental concerns about the impact of brine discharge from the plant on Moreton Bay.

Infrastructure Minister Anna Bligh issued a statement last night saying desalination facilities for the region were "still under assessment".

She said cost and environmental issues associated with the Bribie Island option highlighted the "importance and benefits of the Traveston Crossing Dam – a cost effective strategy".

The KBR report insists the plant is needed to avoid failure of the region's water supply due to the extreme drought. It recommends that during future droughts, the Government plan for the region to rely on a mix of desalinated seawater and purified recycled water to make up for the lack of water in dams and bores.

The second desalination plant would be central to such a contingency plan.

It would be at least as large as the Gold Coast facility, which is expected to supply 125 million litres of water a day.

The KBR report suggests the second plant may need to produce up to 550 million litres a day to cope with the twin pressures of severe drought and population growth.

The report acknowledges there are environmental and feasibility issues surround a desalination facility north of Brisbane. However it warns that "this issue is critical to the feasibility of the draft contingency plan as a whole".

Locals damn river plans

The Clarence River is the waterway the Federal Government wants to dam to secure southeast Queensland's water supply.

Its headwaters lie in Queensland's McPherson Ranges, but it is on the other side of the border, in a place locals call the Clarence Valley, where turbulence is threatening the quiet waters.

The Federal Government last week unveiled a report prepared by the Snowy Mountains Energy Corporation listing five options for pumping water out of NSW and sending it north.

Four of those involve damming the Clarence or Mann rivers and sending the water to the Logan River over the border. The fifth option involves damming the Tweed River to pump water to the Nerang River.

On the surface, what seemed a reasonable solution to an ongoing problem was swiftly condemned by those living on and near the Clarence as politically motivated, impractical and unworkable.

Scientists, fishermen and residents alike say the plan has the potential to destroy the 400km-long river system for good. Some, like fisherman Steve Everson, have a range of concerns.

At risk, he says, is the local fishing industry and most importantly, the continued survival of the Clarence.

"It's so easy to see the Clarence as being big – it is – but it's also very touchy," Mr Everson said.

"People think you can dam it but you can't. It's very fragile."

Mr Everson's concerns are echoed by Clarence River Professional Fishermen's Association's John McGuren, who said the proposal was ridiculous.

"There have been cases across the world where major diversions of river systems have had disastrous consequences," Mr McGuren said.

"If this proposal goes ahead, it will have a massive negative impact on fisheries resources and the ecology in general."

But Prime Minister John Howard and his Water Resources Minister Malcolm Turnbull are optimistic about the possibility of moving ahead, promising further studies to assess and compare the options currently under consideration. Nature Conservation Council of NSW executive director Cate Faehrmann said damming the Clarence would be enormously destructive to the biggest commercial fishery in NSW, as well as a range of agriculture and important ecosystems.

"The solution to our urban water crisis lies in a widespread rollout of rainwater tanks, vastly increased recycling and stopping water wastage," Ms Faehrmann said.

Along the Clarence River, locals also feel betrayed by the manner in which the proposals were rolled out.

"We have no detail and it's in our valley," Clarence Valley Mayor Ian Tiley said.

"Our views haven't been canvassed in any way, and we rely on this river. I think we've been treated fairly shabbily."

Tanks a cheaper solution

Expensive water infrastructure would not be needed in southeast Queensland for at least a decade if extra rainwater tanks were rolled out.

A new study has found controversial projects such as the Traveston Dam and desalination plants could be put on hold by rolling out rainwater tanks to 5 per cent of households each year in conjunction with other water saving measures.

The findings – to be released today by the Australian Conservation Foundation – will increase pressure on the State Government to rethink the controversial 180,000-megalitre dam.

A Senate inquiry will hold its first hearings into the \$1.7 billion project in Gympie tomorrow and Brisbane on Wednesday.

The Government is bracing for a backlash from dam opponents, who argue it will destroy valuable farming land and sensitive ecological habitats. About 78 per cent, or 900,000 homes in southeast Queensland, are suitable for rainwater tanks, which cost between \$2500 and \$3500 to install.

Tanks with a capacity over 3000 litres qualify for a \$500 rebate from Brisbane City Council. Those over 5000 litres qualify for a \$750 rebate. Up to \$1000 is also available from the State Government.

Rolling out rainwater tanks to 5 per cent of southeast Queensland households each year would cost between \$140 million and \$200 million.

This compares with the dam's \$1.7 billion price tag and \$3 billion to build a desalination plant north of Brisbane.

The study – undertaken by respected financial consultants Marsden Jacob Associates – found rainwater tanks were more than five times as energy-efficient as desalination plants.

"The majority of existing dwellings, particularly in SEQ, are detached houses, making them suitable in theory for rainwater tanks," the report said.

But emergency water projects such as the \$1.7 billion Western Corridor Recycled Water Pipeline would still be required.

"It is unlikely that rainwater tanks could be installed in time, or provide sufficient security, to offset emergency water sources such as the SEQ Western Corridor Recycled Water Scheme," the report said.

"However, rainwater tanks can act to free up existing water supplies, and may therefore defer the need for future water sources required to cater for growth."

Nationally, rainwater tanks are installed in 17 per cent of households.

The report said it would take up to 15 years to roll out tanks to every available household in the region.

More than 27,000 tanks have already been installed in Brisbane since City Hall introduced its rebate scheme in 2002.

17th

FarmOnLine

Drought assistance hits all-time high

More than \$2 million a day is being provided by the Federal Government in drought assistance payments – doubling the amount that was being spent just six months ago.

Agriculture Minister, Peter McGauran, says the significant increase in Exceptional Circumstances payments follows the Government's extension in October 2006 of EC assistance to all eligible farmers in EC areas, regardless of what they produce.

"Following the October announcement, the Government's spending on EC income support and interest rate subsidies has jumped from around \$7 million a week, to \$17 million a week," Mr McGauran said.

"We have constantly had our drought assistance measures under review, and the big rise in the amount being provided reflects the Government's efforts to make it as accessible and effective as possible."

In October last year, 9700 farming families were receiving EC income support, but the most recent data reveals that figure has jumped to 17,500 families – an 80pc increase.

"The figures are a stark reminder of the intensity of the prolonged drought, and its severe impact on rural and regional Australia," Mr McGauran said.

"Our farmers, whose reputation for resilience is unparalleled, continue to withstand record high temperatures, and record low rainfall.

"If the strong forecasts from meteorological experts prove to be correct, there should soon be good autumn rains, with decent winter rain to follow.

"This would allow many farmers to enter the drought recovery phase.

56.

"The Government will continue to provide support to farmers through a range of assistance measures, primarily EC, for the duration of the drought."

Mr McGauran urged farmers and small businesses in the 67 EC-declared areas not to self-assess, but to contact the Drought Assistance Hotline on 13 23 16 to determine their eligibility for drought assistance as soon as possible.

SOURCE: Rural Press National News Bureau, Parliament House, Canberra.

\$12M for Tas irrigators and environmental work

Tasmanian irrigators and the environment will benefit from a \$12 million investment from the Federal Government for two major water projects in that state.

Environment and Water Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, announced the funding in Tasmania on Friday, saying the money from the Australian Water Fund would be used to support investments in Tasmania worth a total of \$31m.

"More than \$4.3 million will be provided to the Sassafras-Wesley Vale Irrigation Scheme Project to regulate water use for irrigation in the Sassafras and Wesley Vale regions and return streams to more natural flows," Mr Turnbull said.

The project involves the transfer of four gigalitres per year of water from the Mersey River to irrigators in the Sassafras and Wesley Vale irrigation areas via an existing water pipeline and a new pipeline distribution system. This will replace water that is currently drawn from unregulated overland flow harvesting and groundwater extraction.

"The project will provide security of supply for water users and will return overused/over allocated systems to ensure sustainable use of surface and groundwater," Mr Turnbull said.

A further \$7.8m will be provided to the Tasmanian Water Use Management Project to collect and manage water use data for all irrigation licences across Tasmania.

"The installation of 3000 telemetry units will result in real time monitoring of water use data, access to valuable information for water planners and encourage more efficient water use amongst irrigators," Mr Turnbull said.

"Licensees will have real time access to accurate water use data which will result in more water efficient production." SOURCE: National rural news updated daily by *FarmOnline*.

Vic Govt offers fox and dog bounty

The Victorian Government has launched a \$1 million fox and wild dog bounty, as part of its bushfire recovery package for rural areas.

Minister for Agriculture, Joe Helper, says the initiative has been developed primarily to curb fox and wild dog numbers in bushfire-affected areas.

"This is in addition to existing control programs which take an integrated approach to pest animal management," Mr Helper said.

"As has always been the case, the fox bounty will operate across the state, but collection centres will be focussed in the fire-affected areas of the north-east, Gippsland and the south-west."

The State Government bounty will run for up to six months, providing \$10 for foxes and \$50 for wild dogs.

Mr Helper said the wild dog bounty would be available in designated wild dog areas in the state's east and private land areas adjoining the perimeter of the Wyperfeld National Park and Big Desert Wilderness Park in the west of the state.

"Only members of the Sporting Shooters Association of Victoria, Field and Game Australia and the Australian Deer Association who are Victorian residents or land owners in designated wild dog control areas will be eligible for the wild dog bounty," he said. Collections will be once a month at each location.

