

The Australian - Climate toll starts to soar

As the world grapples with how to address the challenges of climate change at the Bali conference, a report released this week reveals that birds and other native wildlife in Australia are struggling to cope. The Birds Australia report, *The State of Australia's Birds 2007: Birds in a Changing Climate*, provides plenty of evidence indicating that the ways in which many birds breed, migrate and feed are undergoing profound change, even though the measurable increase in temperatures - an average of 1C in recent decades - is seemingly minor. If temperatures rise by as much as experts forecast - by 2070 becoming 2C to 5C higher than what they were in 1990 - the prognosis is extinction for many species, following the progressive collapse of regional populations. That collapse may already be in progress. The Birds Australia report, a collection of papers by scientists, says tropical and subtropical seabird breeding colonies in northern Australia are in decline. In the Great Barrier Reef, brown booby numbers in the Swains Reefs have crashed by 85 per cent since the 1980s. Populations of two tern species at Michaelmas Cay have fallen by 30 per cent. The reductions relate to the increasing incidence of El Nino weather events associated with global warming. Warmer seas reduce the availability of fish and other food to seabirds, probably by forcing it into deeper water. During the 2002 El Nino, the chick mortality rate in the wedge-tailed shearwater colony on Heron Island was 100 per cent, and 2000 adult birds died. The Birds Australia report identifies the birds of the savannas and rainforests of northern Australia as being among those most at risk from climate change, with 55 per cent of the 387 species recorded there anticipated to suffer big population declines. In the wet tropics of north Queensland a suite of species confined to high altitude rainforests, including the spectacular golden bowerbird, face extinction as temperatures rise. The habitats of the chowchilla and the fernwren are already contracting steadily upland. A slight rise in sea levels, believed inevitable by many climate experts, would see the vast wetlands of Kakadu and the Gulf of Carpentaria plains invaded by salt water, destroying the habitat of magpie geese and other freshwater birds. Elsewhere in the north, hotter and more frequent fires would put more pressure on endangered golden-shouldered parrots and gouldian finches, while an expected increase in the frequency of cyclones would make the cassowary's tenuous hold on survival even shakier. Feeding behaviour is being altered by warming, creating its own problems. Kookaburras have penetrated high mountain areas, which were once too cold for them. They are wiping out alpine skinks, which make no attempt to evade the birds because they have not learned to identify them as predators. Says the Birds Australia report: "Bioclimatic modelling suggests species losses will occur under relatively moderate climate change scenarios, with the magnitude of the loss increasing as the expected temperature changes increase." It identifies 31 birds considered to be at high risk of extinction. They include the mallee fowl, orange-bellied parrot, Albert's lyrebird, hooded plover and fairy tern. The report says many birds that might otherwise have been able to adapt to climate change will be hard-pressed to do so because their habitat has been fragmented by land clearing. The report explains that temperature changes affect bird populations because climate regulates the geographic limits of their distribution; it sets the boundaries of environmental conditions within which a species can function. Climate provides the energy and water inputs that determine rates of plant photosynthesis, growth and decomposition. Small changes in temperature may mean that the habitat of a particular bird is no longer suitable for its needs. Climate-related habitat changes noted in recent decades that have affected bird populations include the encroachment of eucalypts into rainforest and of woody weeds into inland woodlands; a 40 per cent reduction in spring snow depth and the spread of trees into alpine meadows; and glacial retreat in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic. Not all is gloom, however. While seabird populations in the tropics are crashing, warmer waters farther south have boosted numbers of temperate seabird species. The Australasian gannet population in Bass Strait has increased threefold in two decades. Warmer weather has led to the distribution of northern birds spreading south. Species such as figbirds and common koels, which were once unknown even in the vicinity of Sydney, are turning up in Victoria. Others, such as pied butcherbirds, white-headed pigeons and pheasant coucals, have expanded their range south by up to three degrees latitude; their southward march continues at a rate of 100km to 150km a decade. "These changes are an indication that some species may have the potential to adapt and others don't," the Birds Australia report says. Migration patterns, established over thousands of years, have changed markedly in just a decade. Birds such as white-throated nightjars and little bronze-cuckoos, which were once strictly summer visitors to some regions, stay all year. Other summer visitors are arriving earlier and staying later. Breeding behaviour also is undergoing change, probably due to a combination of warmer temperatures and a 30 per cent decline in rainfall in southern Australia over the past decade. Studies of masked lapwings, a common species, show the birds are nesting two days earlier a year in north Queensland and one day later in southeast Australia. In Tasmania, the lapwing's breeding success is declining by 1.5 per cent a year. The report warns that introduced weeds will prosper in warmer temperatures.

Fire-adapted weeds such as gamba grass from Africa will accelerate the frequency and severity of fires, with the Queensland Government warning that the extensive savanna woodlands of the state's north could end up as treeless plains. "Invasive species will be big winners from climate change, and that bodes ill for many birds," the report says. Increased levels of carbon dioxide are expected to reduce nitrogen levels in eucalypt leaves, reducing in turn populations of lerp insects. Lerp insects are a substantial part of the diet of honeyeaters and many other Australian bush birds. Arguing that carbon trading has the potential to do much to protect biodiversity in the face of global warming, the report concludes: "Overwhelmingly, we must stabilise and then reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There is nothing to be lost and everything to be gained."

Adelaide.now.com - [Earthquake rocks Bali](#)

A powerful Subject - Talking 'CLIMATE CHANGE' makes Earth move

A strong earthquake has tonight rattled Indonesia's resort island of Bali where thousands of people are gathering for a U.N. climate change conference. It did not trigger a tsunami warning and there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries. The underwater tremor had a preliminary magnitude of 5.9 and was centered 250 kilometres southwest of Jember, in East Java province, Indonesia's Meteorological and Geophysics Agency said. It could be felt in nearby Bali, where more than 10,000 people were attending a two-week conference to discuss rising global temperatures, which scientists say could lead to severe droughts and flooding, melting ice caps and rising seas, and the extinction of animals. Delegates from nearly 190 nations were represented. Indonesia, the world's largest archipelago, is prone to seismic upheavals due to its location on the so-called Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanos and fault lines encircling the Pacific Basin. In December 2004, a massive earthquake struck off Sumatra island, triggering a tsunami that killed more than 230,000 people in a dozen countries, including 160,000 people in Indonesia's westernmost province of Aceh.

News.com.au - [Water tanks make a comeback as dam levels drop](#)

The rainwater tank, once as common as the Hills Hoist, is making a comeback. New Australian Bureau of Statistics show almost one in five Australian households now have a water tank installed, decades after their slow demise due to mains water connections and their condemnation as public health hazards. Jurg Keller, director of the Advanced Water Management Centre at the University of Queensland, said a new conservation ethic had taken hold in cities as dam levels dropped. "I think it's primarily due to the awareness created by the water shortage," he said, citing southeast Queensland as an example. "We've reduced the overall water consumption on a per capita basis by pretty much 50 per cent on three or four years ago." Government subsidies had also helped, he added. The ABS survey of Australians' attitudes to water conservation found almost half of householders who had thought about installing tanks were put off by the price. But across the country, the share of homes with water tanks has also jumped, from 15.2 per cent three years ago to 19.3 per cent this year, it showed. A further 76,000 households were awaiting delivery and installation of a tank. In South Australia, almost half of households use some water from tanks, and over a fifth use them as their main source of drinking water. Professor Keller said tank water still fell short of drinking-water standards, attributing Adelaide's thirst for rainwater to the poor taste of mains water there. But he applauded the return of the tanks to the suburbs, and the growth in greywater harvesting and dual-flush toilets, reported in the survey, as signs that individuals were taking collective action.

NEWS.com.au - [Poor nations must slash emissions too: Australia](#)

Both rich and poor nations must commit to slashing greenhouse gas emissions if the world wants to solve global warming, Australia Trade Minister Simon Crean said at a landmark climate change summit. As the first week of the conference trying to lay the groundwork for a new climate change pact drew to a close, delegates in Indonesia's Bali appeared divided on the way forward to curb carbon dioxide emissions. "We said during the election campaign that developing countries needed to make commitments ... and that is a position that we will be bringing to this conference," said Simon Crean, who was sworn in as Australia's trade minister after Kevin Rudd led Labor to victory in last month's elections. Japan and Canada are reported to be pushing for booming developing nations such as India and China - set to become the world's major polluters - to commit to binding cuts in carbon dioxide emissions, which contribute to global warming. But Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the UN Convention on Climate Change, under which countries are meeting, said such demands were not likely to be met when governments were trying to pull their citizens out of poverty. "Developing countries have made it very clear that it is inconceivable for them to accept legally binding targets," he said. The European Union, poorer countries led by China, and environmental activists are urging the rich world to commit to reducing their polluting emissions by 25 to 40 percent by 2020. Crean said Australia was not going to sign up to any binding commitments on battling climate change until they had the results of a report commissioned by Rudd's climate change economic specialist, expected next year. **What another report? – trust Rudd, I don't think so!** "Australia has said that we understand that if we're to solve this problem we're going to have to commit to targets," he said, adding that the new government would lay out its pledges "at the appropriate time".

Rudd ratified the Kyoto Protocol, the 1997 deal on battling climate change, in his first official act after being sworn in as prime minister. The move reversed the policy of the previous Howard government, a key US ally, which declined to sign up. The current US administration has stressed that it will not sign up to any mandatory emissions cuts targets that hamper economic growth. Environmental groups are pushing for emissions cuts to appear in the final text when the Bali summit ends on December 14, and de Boer said such an inclusion "would hugely improve the clarity of the message". An umbrella of environmental groups have accused the Canadian delegation of trying to spoil the climate negotiations with its stance. "Canada is driving a tar sands truck right through the middle of the negotiations here in Bali," said Steven Guilbeault, from ecological group Equiterre. "The Kyoto Protocol is built on the recognition that industrialised countries are largely responsible for the problem of climate change, and must take the lead in tackling it." Delegates from more than 180 countries are currently in Bali to hammer out a timeframe for a new deal on tackling climate change when the current phase of the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012. Environment ministers will arrive in Bali at the end of next week, while trade and finance ministers and representatives have begun gathering on the sidelines of the summit. But de Boer warned that the number of issues on the table might hamper talks. "What worries me a little bit is that too many issues are going to slip into the high-level segment, and that ministers will have too much on their plate, and a very limited time with which to reach a conclusion," he said. Elsewhere on Bali Saturday, police said about 500 activists carrying effigies and banners marched in the main town of Denpasar, calling for action from the summit.

Radical Christians blame sinners for drought

A radical Christian group with the ear of prominent politicians has blamed "sinful" Australians for the nation's record drought. Catch the Fires Ministries, which has links to several prominent politicians including Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, has hired Festival Hall so 5000 of its followers can pray for rain on Australia Day. Leader Danny Nalliah said moral decline, not climate change, was responsible for the drought. "Australia has turned away from Almighty God ... the sinful condition of mankind has contributed to the stem of rainfall," he said. But Mr Nalliah, who was one of two pastors sued for vilifying Muslims, said prayer was breaking the drought. The group has a national database of 10,000 names. PM Kevin Rudd sent a video address to one of the ministry's events. And Mr Nalliah, who has addressed the anti-Semitic League of Rights, has had meetings with John Howard and Peter Costello. "When John Howard called the nation to pray for rain, and the church enthusiastically responded in united prayer, the heavens opened," he said. "Since that historic prayer gathering in our nation's capital, Australia has experienced unceasing drought-breaking rain." Despite his opposition to Islam, the pastor's position is similar to that of Muslim cleric Mohammed Omran. This year Sheik Omran preached the drought, climate change and pollution were due to Australians' lack of faith in Allah. "The fear of Allah is not there. So we have now a polluted earth, a polluted water, a wasteland," he told a meeting.

Adelaide.now.com - Advertiser EDITORIAL: Necessary strategy to waterproof SA

The State Government had no choice but to put into place measures which will effectively ensure Adelaide and major regional centres do not run out of water. Of course the initiatives come at a cost to every South Australian – but increased water charges are both expected and justifiable. For far too long South Australians have squandered water because it has simply been too cheap. As a community we have taken a precious resource for granted. We have lavished our gardens and crops with water while millions of litres which should have been harvested, have been allowed to run out to sea. A long-term and damaging drought, together with the threatened collapse of the Murray-Darling River system due to over-use, has now forced the State Government to act. Premier Mike Rann has unveiled a series of measures, including the construction of a desalination plant, which at least match in importance the move to pipe water from the River Murray implemented half a century ago. The use of the Murray water bought SA time. But eventually dependence on Hills catchments and the Murray was not going to be enough to sustain a city of 1.3 million people – together with major regional communities. Without the guarantee of reliable water for both domestic and industrial use, SA would wilt as a viable region for industrial investment and expansion. Successive governments have closed their minds to the need to build additional water infrastructure. While water from the Murray topped up the natural rainfall feed into the reservoir system the governments appeared to adopt the course of least resistance – if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Now the system is broken. With stringent domestic restrictions – and personal sacrifice – we have so far ridden out the crisis generated by the drought. But it has come at a cost to traditional lifestyle. Public and private gardens are burned. Precious plants, including the traditional front and back lawns, are dying. Some people have chosen to put in rainwater tanks or redirect stormwater and grey water. The centrepiece of the Government's water strategy is the installation of a desalination plant at Port Stanvac by 2012. But it is equally important, and long overdue, that stormwater harvesting and water recycling is part of the plan. Lifting the wall, and therefore the capacity, of the Mt Bold Reservoir is an obvious need.

To at least partly meet the cost of waterproofing SA, the Government is increasing water charges. Most householders will have to find extra cash even if they practice sensible conservation. After being publicly unconvinced about a desalination plant, the Government has acted correctly. The alternative was to do nothing and watch the inevitable decline of an otherwise viable economic region.

Internet - Worldwide protests urge climate change action

Marches held in more than 50 cities to coincide with U.N. warming summit

Thousands of climate change protesters march toward the U.S. Embassy in London on Saturday. Marches were held in more than 50 cities around the world to coincide with the two-week U.N. Climate Change Conference, which runs through Friday in Bali, Indonesia.

LONDON - Skiers, fire-eaters and an ice sculptor joined in worldwide demonstrations Saturday to draw attention to climate change and push their governments to take stronger action to fight global warming. From costume parades in the Philippines to a cyclist's protest in London, marches were held in more than 50 cities around the world to coincide with the two-week U.N. Climate Change Conference, which runs through Friday in Bali, Indonesia. Hundreds of people rallied in the Philippine capital, Manila, wearing miniature windmills atop hats, or framing their faces in cardboard cutouts of the sun.

China, U.S. face off on climate policies

China said Friday it will not consider mandatory cuts on greenhouse gases, saying the United States and other industrialized countries should take the lead in fighting climate change.

BALI, Indonesia - China said Friday it will not consider mandatory cuts on greenhouse gases, saying the United States and other industrialized countries should take the lead in fighting climate change by embracing a less-extravagant lifestyle. China, which some believed has surpassed the United States as the world's top emitter of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases, also questioned the fairness of binding cuts when its per capita emissions are about one-sixth of those by the United States. It also noted that it's only been pumping pollutants into the atmosphere for the last few decades, whereas the West has done so for much longer. "China is in the process of industrialization and there is a need for economic growth to meet the basic needs of the people and fight against poverty," said Su Wei, a member of the country's delegation at the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Bali. "I just wonder whether it's fair to ask developing countries like China to take on binding targets or mandatory targets," Su said. "I think there is much room for the United States to think whether it's possible to change (its) lifestyle and consumption patterns in order to contribute to the protection of the global climate." Delegates from nearly 190 nations are attending the Dec. 3-14 gathering charged with launching negotiations that will lead to an international accord to succeed the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on global warming. Kyoto, which was rejected by the United States, commits three dozen industrialized countries to cut their greenhouse gases an average of 5 percent below 1990 levels between next year and 2012, when it expires.

Bush position: - One of the factors that led President Bush to reject Kyoto was the complaint that fast-developing countries such as China, India and Brazil were not required to cut their emissions under the pact. U.S. climate chief Harlan Watson opened the American's two briefings this week by outlining how Washington is fighting global warming its own way, with technology, aid and economic growth. He has denied the U.S. feels isolated. The Bush administration says imposing mandatory emissions cuts will harm economic growth, and favors individual countries setting their own goals instead. Washington also backs private sector initiatives to develop energy-saving technology and alternative energy sources, such as ethanol and other biofuels. It also says industry should devise ways to burn coal and other fossil fuels more cleanly. Still, conference delegates recognize a deal without the United States is meaningless. The U.S. is the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, and is home to the globe's largest economy. Robust participation by Washington in a climate accord puts enormous resources at the disposal of the anti-global warming fight.

Views on China change: - China, for its part, is now being seen as playing a constructive role at the Bali conference after years of dodging the issue and appearing defensive on global warming. "I think China is taking climate change seriously and that's a good sign that there will be a good outcome here in Bali," said Artur Runge-Metzger, head of the European Commission delegation at the conference on the Indonesian island. China has expressed support for a post-Kyoto agreement and used the conference to spread the message that it is doing plenty to address climate change — from boosting its use of renewable energy to 10 percent by 2010 and improving their energy efficiency by 20 percent. It also has launched a massive tree-planting program and has rolled out a national climate change policy. "China is acting. We will do what we should and what we can do," Su said, describing his country's climate policy as ambitious," Su said. "All we care for is the well-being and the future of mankind." Even hard-to-please environmental groups who relish lambasting industrialized countries for pollution are praising Beijing, although it's clear China has more to do. It relies heavily on dirty, outdated coal burning techniques, has 20 of the world's 30 most polluted cities, and some of the most polluted rivers.

Nations ranked by emissions

China's ranking on Germanwatch's 40th annual index, which ranks 56 industrialized and emerging countries, was an improvement of four places over last year, the group said Friday. The United States and Saudi Arabia were the worst on the list, at 55th and 56th places, respectively. Environmental watchdog Germanwatch noted the Chinese government has enacted policies promoting renewable energy, including mandates that solar, wind, hydroelectric and other forms of renewable energy provide 10 percent of the nation's power by 2010. It also has ordered key industries to reduce energy consumption by 20 percent. Politicians and activists said China's defensive posture of the past has given way to constructive discussions at the Bali conference. Beijing has also taken the lead among developing countries in calling for wealthier nations to speed up the transfer of cleaner technologies to emerging economies to help shift away from fossil fuels. Hans Verolme, director of WWF International's Global Climate Change Program, attributed China's position to concerns over energy security and a recognition that climate change is already having a severe impact on the country, with worsening drought, water shortages and floods. "China has made up its mind about a year ago that it was going to get serious," Verolme said. "They want to show to the world it understands and it wants to do what is necessary to stop dangerous climate change."

Calif. industry required to track warming gases

EL MONTE, Calif. - California on Thursday became the first state in the nation to require oil refineries, electricity generating plants, cement kilns and other major emitters to report their annual greenhouse gas emissions beginning in 2009. The mandatory reporting rule approved by state air regulators would affect 800 manufacturing facilities that account for about 95 percent of emissions from industrial sources in California. Through the end of the year, businesses can continue to voluntarily submit their carbon emissions to the California Climate Action Registry, a nonprofit created by the state in 2000 to encourage companies and government agencies to track and ultimately reduce their emissions.

Wildlife dying, shifting as warming takes hold

'A hell of a lot of species are in big trouble,' expert says

A gray headed flying fox, which is actually a bat, flies over the Sydney Botanical gardens in Sydney, Australia, on Nov. 29. More than 3,000 flying foxes dropped dead o 2002 due to a heat wave.

BALI, Indonesia - More than 3,000 flying foxes dropped dead, falling from trees in Australia. Giant squid migrated north to commercial fishing grounds off California, gobbling anchovy and hake. Butterflies have gone extinct in the Alps. While humans' debate at U.N. climate change talks in Bali, global warming is already wreaking havoc with nature. Most plants and animals are affected, and the change is occurring too quickly for them to evolve. "A hell of a lot of species are in big trouble," said Stephen Williams, the director of the Centre for Tropical Biodiversity & Climate Change at James Cook University in Australia.

Climate talks get mixed message from U.S.

Bush remains against mandatory curbs; Congress weighs bill to do just that

Activists from the group Oxfam wear polar bear costumes Thursday outside the U.N. climate conference at Bali, Indonesia.

BALI, Indonesia - American climate negotiators refused to back down in their opposition to mandatory cuts in greenhouse gas emissions Thursday, even as a U.S. Senate panel endorsed sharp reductions in pollution blamed for global warming. The United States, the world's largest producer of such gases, has resisted calls for strict limits on emissions at the U.N. climate conference, which is aimed at launching negotiations for an agreement to follow the Kyoto Protocol when it expires in 2012. That stance suffered a blow when the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee passed a bill Wednesday to cut U.S. emissions by 70 percent by 2050 from electric power plants, manufacturing and transportation. The bill now goes to the full Senate. U.S. climate negotiator Harlan Watson, however, said that would not impact Washington's position at the international gathering in Bali. "In our process, a vote for movement of a bill out of committee does not ensure its ultimate passage," he told reporters. "I don't know the details, but we will not alter our posture here." It was the first bill calling for mandatory U.S. limit on greenhouse gases to be taken up in Congress since global warming emerged as an environmental issue more than two decades ago. Republican critics of the bill argued that limiting the emissions could become a hardship because of higher energy costs.

Two distinct camps: - The two-week conference, which opened Monday, is already in a tense standoff between two camps, with the majority supporting mandatory emissions cuts on one side, and opponents such as the United States on the other, delegates said. Scientists say the world must act quickly to slash greenhouse gas emissions and limit the rise in global temperatures or risk triggering devastating droughts and flooding, strangling world food production and killing off animal species.

Washington's isolation in Bali has increased following Australia's announcement Monday that it has reversed its opposition to the Kyoto pact and started the ratification process — winning applause at the conference's opening session. That left the U.S. as the only industrialized nation to oppose the agreement. The U.S. Senate action cheered environmentalists and others in Bali clamoring for dramatic action to stop global warming. U.N. climate chief Yvo de Boer led off his daily briefing Thursday by hailing the "encouraging sign" from the United States. "This is a very welcome development," Alden Meyer of the Union of Concerned Scientists said of the Senate measure. "It shows the increasing isolation of the Bush administration in terms of U.S. policy on this issue." David Waskow, of the Oxfam humanitarian agency, said the Senate legislation was a positive signal to developing nations and others in Bali that America may be ready to assume a more active role in battling climate change. "It's one of the things that point the way to having the United States re-engage in the negotiations, and really I think in many ways demonstrates the U.S. leadership on these issues," Waskow said. Further momentum for serious greenhouse gas cuts, came from a petition released Thursday by a group of at least 215 climate scientists who urged the world to reduce emissions by half by 2050. "We have to start reducing greenhouse gas emissions as soon as we possibly can," said Australian climatologist Matthew England, a group spokesman. "It needs action. We're talking about now."

'Apprehensive' mood inside: - The United States and ally Japan are proposing that the post-Kyoto agreement favor voluntary emission targets, arguing that mandatory cuts would threaten economic growth which generates money needed to fund technology to effectively fight global warming. Indonesian Environment Minister Rachmat Witoelar, the host of the conference, said the mood in the closed-door negotiations was "serious, apprehensive," but that there were hopes the U.S. would slowly change its stance. "I think the United States will be judicious enough to accept the changes of atmosphere," said Witoelar. But U.S. Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns denied that Australia's acceptance of the Kyoto accord would prompt Washington to do the same. "We do not see eye-to-eye with Australia or many other countries on the wisdom of signing the Kyoto regime, that's obvious," Burns said in Sydney, Australia.

San Francisco to vote on business 'carbon tax'

Mayor promises businesses would also see cut in payroll tax

SAN FRANCISCO - Mayor Gavin Newsom plans to ask voters next year to approve a "carbon tax" on businesses that he says would provide a financial incentive for conserving energy and motivating workers to use public transportation. The ballot measure would increase the city's 5 percent commercial utilities tax by an as-yet-undetermined amount to encourage energy-saving steps by hotels, offices and other nonresidential buildings, Newsom said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. To keep the higher rates from becoming an economic drag on the city, the initiative would carry a corresponding decrease in the 1.5 percent payroll tax on for-profit businesses in San Francisco, according to the mayor. Last year, Boulder, Colo., became the first U.S. city to adopt a tax to combat global warming, specifically an electricity bill charge on kilowatt-hours used. Officials in Portland, Ore., last month proposed charging developers for every home they build that exceeds the city's energy efficiency building requirements. Newsom said that by tying the revenue from the proposed carbon tax to lower payroll taxes, his proposal would make San Francisco the first city taking a business friendly, "revenue-neutral" approach to the idea of pollution pricing. "That's the exciting debate that is taking shape around this country — replacing a job hindrance tax with a tax that should be taxing something that is inherently bad, which is greenhouse gas emissions," he said.

November ballot: - The mayor's staff still is writing the measure, which Newsom said he intends to submit for the November 2008 ballot. The plan, as it stands now, is to include a second payroll tax cut for businesses that succeed in getting more of their commuting employees to give up cars for public transportation, said Jared Blumenfeld, director of the San Francisco Department of the Environment. A third piece of the carbon tax proposal would raise garbage collection and dumping fees for both homes and businesses on each bin of waste that is destined for a landfill instead of ready to be recycled, Blumenfeld said. Under the working draft of the proposal, the payroll tax decrease linked to higher utility bills would come as a fiscal year-end rebate, said Ted Egan, the mayor's chief economist. How big a payroll tax cut businesses get would depend on how much revenue is generated by the higher utility tax, Egan said. Every business that pays both taxes would receive the same percentage cut to their payroll taxes, regardless of how much they curb their gas and electricity use, Egan said. Those that fail to adopt energy efficient measures, however, would not enjoy as much savings as companies that embrace the concept because their utility bills would be higher, Newsom said. "Net neutral does not mean there won't be an increase for those who do absolutely nothing," said the Democratic mayor, who last month was re-elected to a second term. "They should pay more, and that's the point." If enough businesses take significant steps to reduce their reliance on conventional energy sources, the utility tax over time would theoretically cease generating extra revenue that could be returned to them through the payroll rebate, Egan said.

In that case, the city could either approve another carbon tax or be satisfied with its contribution to combating global warming, he said.

Business wants to know more: - Jim Lazarus, vice president of public policy for the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, said it was too soon to say whether local businesses would back the ballot initiative because too many details remain to be worked out. Among the questions Lazarus had was how a carbon tax would affect different types of businesses, whether companies that already have adopted significant energy-saving measures would be penalized, and if the payroll tax reductions would be financed over the long-term. But the chamber has generally supported legislation to reduce global warming, he said, including a law signed last year by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger that requires California air regulators to create laws and incentives that would reduce the state's greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2020. "We are very supportive of all the steps the mayor and the city have taken to get in front of reducing the carbon foot print of the residents and businesses in San Francisco," Lazarus said. "Lots of issues have to be worked out, but we look forward to sitting on whatever committee the mayor appoints to work all of this out."

Climate experts declare: 'No time to lose'

Dozen cross the line into policy by signing statement at U.N. talks

The science of climate change includes a study earlier this year that found Antarctic Peninsula glaciers like this one are melting faster into the sea.

WASHINGTON - For the first time, more than 200 of the world's leading climate scientists, losing their patience, urged government leaders to take radical action to slow global warming because "there is no time to lose." A petition from at least 215 climate scientists calls for the world to cut in half greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Unveiled Wednesday night, it is directed at a conference of diplomats meeting in Bali, Indonesia, to negotiate the next global warming treaty. "The amount of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere now far exceeds the natural range of the past 650,000 years, and it is rising very quickly due to human activity," the scientists stated. "If this trend is not halted soon, many millions of people will be at risk from extreme events such as heat waves, drought, floods and storms, our coasts and cities will be threatened by rising sea levels, and many ecosystems, plants and animal species will be in serious danger of extinction." The appeal from scientists follows a petition last week from more than 150 global business leaders also demanding the 50 percent cut in greenhouse gases. That is the estimate that scientists calculate would hold future global warming to a little more than a 3-degree Fahrenheit increase and is in line with what the European Union has adopted. "Greenhouse gas concentrations need to be stabilized at a level well below 450 ppm (parts per million; measured in CO₂-equivalent concentration)," the scientists added. "In order to stay below 2° C (3 degrees F), global emissions must peak and decline in the next 10 to 15 years, so there is no time to lose." In the past, many of these scientists have avoided calls for action, leaving that to environmental advocacy groups. That dispassionate stance was taken during the release this year of four separate reports by the Nobel Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. But no more. "It's a grave crisis, and we need to do something real fast," said petition signer Jeff Severinghaus, a geosciences professor at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California. "I think the stakes are way too high to be playing around."

Expert: We're 'fed up': - The unprecedented petition includes scientists from more than 25 countries and shows that "the climate science community is essentially fed up," said signer Andrew Weaver of the University of Victoria in Canada. It includes many co-authors of the intergovernmental climate change panel reports, directors of major American and European climate science research institutions, a Nobel winner for atmospheric chemistry and a winner of a MacArthur "genius" award. "A lot of us scientists think the problem needs a lot more serious attention than it's getting and the remedies have to be a lot more radical," said Richard Seager, a scientist at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. The organizers of the petition — two Australians, two Germans and an American — would not comment about their efforts before their 11 p.m. ET press conference. But several scientists who signed on talked of losing patience. "Action needs to be taken and needs to be taken now," said Marika Holland, a scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research who signed on. "The longer we wait, the worse it's going to become." Negotiators in Bali are working on the initial groundwork for a treaty that would take effect after 2012, the expiration date of the Kyoto Protocol, a climate treaty the United States did not sign. However, no one expects concrete results at the closed-door sessions. NASA scientist Gavin Schmidt, who signed the petition, said "the time for half-measures and the time for voluntary agreements and the time for arguing about 1 percent here and 1 percent there — those things are no longer relevant." Schmidt noted while scientists have been dismissed by some as unrealistic, the call for a 50 percent emissions cut by business leaders "helps give credence to the idea that it's achievable."

From complaints to policy?: - Policy analysts, who were not part of either petition, split on how meaningful the two petitions are.

What is happening is people are agreeing, "that the cost of inaction is on the high side and the cost of action is affordable," said Joseph Romm, a policy analyst at the liberal think-tank Center for American Progress, energy business consultant and trained physicist. But Jerry Taylor, a senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute said "scientists are in no position to intelligently guide public policy on climate change." Scientists can lay out scenarios, but it is up to economists to weigh the costs and benefits and many of them say the costs of cutting emissions are higher than the benefits, he said. Granger Morgan, a professor of engineering and public policy at Carnegie Mellon University, said he sees "a growing realization among a wide variety of players that we've got to stop talking about this and start some action." But, he added, "I'm not going to hold my breath that we're going to get anything."

Coral reefs rebuilt with current, the electric kind

Electricity on metal frames fosters growth of limestone, key building block.

PEMUTERAN BAY, Indonesia - Just a few years ago, the lush coral reefs off Bali island were dying out, bleached by rising temperatures, blasted by dynamite fishing and poisoned by cyanide. Now they are coming back, thanks to an unlikely remedy: electricity. The coral is thriving on dozens of metal structures submerged in the bay and fed by cables that send low-voltage electricity, which conservationists say is reviving it and spurring greater growth. As thousands of delegates, experts and activists debate climate at a conference that opened this week on Bali, the coral restoration project illustrates the creative ways scientists are trying to fight the ill-effects of global warming. The project — dubbed Bio-Rock — is the brainchild of scientist Thomas Goreau and the late architect Wolf Hilbertz. The two have set up similar structures in some 20 countries, but the Bali experiment is the most extensive. Goreau said the Pemuteran reefs off Bali's northwestern shore were under serious assault by 1998, victims of rising temperatures and aggressive fishing methods by impoverished islanders, such as stunning fish with cyanide poison and scooping them up with nets. "Under these conditions, traditional (revival) methods fail," explained Goreau, who is in Bali presenting his research at the U.N.-led conference. "Our method is the only one that speeds coral growth."

Too much to electrify?: - Some say the effort is severely limited. Rod Salm, coral reef specialist with the Nature Conservancy, said while the method may be useful in bringing small areas of damaged coral back to life, it has very limited application in vast areas that need protection. "The extent of bleaching ... is just too big," Salm said. "The scale is enormous and the cost is prohibitive." Others note the Bali project is mostly dependent on traditionally generated electricity; a method that itself contributes to global warming. Goreau himself concedes it has yet to attract significant financial backing. Nonetheless, scientists agree that coral reefs are an especially valuable — and sensitive — global environmental asset. They provide shorelines with protection from tides and waves, and host a stunning diversity of plant and sea life. Goreau's method for reviving coral is decidedly low-tech, if somewhat unorthodox. It has long been known that coral that breaks off the reef can be salvaged and restored if it can somehow be reattached.

Metal frames used: - What Goreau's Bali project has done is to construct metal frames, often in the shape of domes or greenhouses, and submerge them in the bay. When hooked up to a low-voltage energy source on the shore, limestone — a building block of reefs — naturally gathers on the metal. Workers then salvage coral that has broken from damaged reefs and affix it to the structure. Goreau and his supporters say the electricity spurs the weakened coral to revival and greater growth. "When they get the juice, they are not as stressed," said Rani Morrow-Wuigk, an Australian-German woman who rents bungalows on the beach and has supported efforts to save the reefs for years. And indeed, the coral on the structures appear vibrant, and supporters say they have rebounded with impressive vigor. The coral in Pemuteran teems with clownfish, damselfish and other colorful tropical animals. Funding, however, is a major problem. There are some 40 metal structures growing coral in Pemuteran Bay and about 100 cables laid to feed them with electricity, but only about a third of the wires are working because of maintenance problems and the cost of running them, said Morrow-Wuigk. The electrification program is part of a wider effort in the bay to save the coral.

Dynamite still an issue: - Chris Brown, an Australian diving instructor who has lived in Bali for 17 years, said he and other people determined to save the reefs have had a long struggle driving away fishermen who use dynamite and other coral-destroying methods to maintain their livelihoods. He said a key has been demonstrating to shoreline communities the benefits of coral reef maintenance, such as growing fish stocks and jobs catering to tourists who come to dive in the area. Brown has participated in Goreau's projects, and won funding from the Australian government to set up a Bio-Rock structure electrified by solar panels fixed on a floating offshore platform. Brown has also used seed-money from Canberra to establish the Reef Gardeners of Pemuteran, which trains islanders to dive, maintain the solar-paneled coral structure and clean the reefs of harmful animals. Kadek Darma, a Balinese who has worked with Brown for two years, said the advantages of the corals to the local economy were obvious. "They attract the tourists, and more tourists means more jobs," he said. "I hope we can all keep maintaining the reefs for our great-great grandchildren."

Warming risks listed by population, costs

Report: 150 million people, \$35 trillion in assets vulnerable by 2070

PARIS - The number of people threatened by coastal flooding due to climate change could more than triple by 2070 and the value of exposed property could balloon to \$35 trillion, according to a report released Tuesday by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The Paris-based OECD, an international non-governmental organization that collects and studies economic statistics and social data, called for quick action on coastal defenses for cities at risk, saying it can take 30 years to build defenses for vulnerable cities. "Climate change is already happening, and concerted action is needed now to prevent its worst impacts," OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría said in a statement. "A range of economic policy options is available and political commitment is needed to implement them." About 150 million people could be exposed to a "1-in-100 year" flooding event by 2070 — up from 40 million now at risk, according to the report. The "1-in-100-year" scenario, which was used because it is a commonly accepted risk assessment standard, also assumed a mean rise in sea level of a half-meter (1.6 feet) by 2070. The study estimated the financial impact of such a scenario at \$35 trillion, compared to \$3 trillion today.

Cities listed: - The report also listed cities most likely to be impacted in terms of population and cost, focusing on 136 port cities around the world. Calcutta, India, heads the list of the top 10 cities at risk in 2070 in terms of population exposure, with India's Mumbai, or Bombay, second. Miami, Fla., in ninth place, was the only city in a developed country on the report's list of the 10 top cities at risk due to population exposure. The other cities on that list are Dhaka (Bangladesh), Guangzhou (China), Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam), Shanghai (China), Bangkok (Thailand), Rangoon (Myanmar) and Hai Phong (Vietnam), respectively. For present-day conditions, the top 10 cities in terms of exposed population are estimated to be Mumbai, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Miami, Ho Chi Minh City, Calcutta, Greater New York, Osaka-Kobe (Japan), Alexandria (Egypt) and New Orleans, respectively. In terms of the highest value of property and infrastructure assets in 2070, Miami leads that list should a "1-in-100-year" flood occur, the report said, with exposed assets expected to rise from \$400 billion today to over \$3.5 trillion by 2070.

Rising impact in Asia: - The report pointed to the development of Asian "mega-cities," with their soaring populations, as a key factor increasing the risk in coastal flooding. Indeed, by 2070, eight of the most financially exposed cities were predicted to be in Asia. Guangzhou is the second most exposed city in terms of assets, followed by New York, Calcutta, Shanghai, Mumbai, Tianjin (China), Tokyo (Japan), Hong Kong (China), and Bangkok, respectively. In terms of assets today, Miami also leads in that category, followed by the greater New York area, New Orleans, Osaka-Kobe, Tokyo, Amsterdam (Netherlands), Rotterdam (Netherlands), Nagoya (Japan), Tampa-St Petersburg and Virginia Beach. "The policy implications of this report are clear," the OECD said in an introduction, "The benefits of climate change policies — both global mitigation and local adaptation at the city-scale — are potentially great." As for the cost of inaction, the report states that "(Hurricane) Katrina and New Orleans demonstrates how significant these consequences might be — 1,500 deaths, evacuation of 700,000 people, with hundreds of thousands still displaced two years on, massive flood damage from which recovery is still ongoing, and the global shock to the oil price. "New Orleans may never fully recover and another major hurricane landfall could trigger further decline or even total abandonment," the report adds. "Given the large and growing concentration of people and assets in port city locations, and the importance of global trade, failure to develop effective adaptation strategies would inevitably have not just local but also large national and even wider economic consequences." The report was the first in a series by the OECD looking at the economic impact of climate change on cities.

Murray Valley Standard - Irrigators take united approach

Irrigators and Murray Darling Association (MDA) members met in Berri on Monday to discuss and try to solve the industry's water woes. At the meeting, five resolutions were agreed on which tackled the need for emergency financial assistance, low interest, 20-year loans and a national water register. These resolutions have been sent through to River Murray Minister Karlene Maywald for her attention and response. MDA general manager Ray Najar said even though the meeting was in Berri, the resolutions applied to all irrigators. "Whether it's Murray Bridge, Mannum, Renmark or Mildura, we are all in the same boat," he said. South Australian Murray Irrigators president Ian Zadow agreed with Mr. Najar, and went to the meeting to show support for Riverland irrigators and the MDA. "The thing we have to be careful about is having a splintered approach," he said. It was decided, emergency assistance measures need to be implemented immediately, which do not need to be means tested or have an asset threshold, through either water purchases or interest rates. "The trouble with the current EC (Exceptional Circumstances) program (is that it's) for broadacre farming and dryland farming, because irrigators have never been in this situation before," Mr. Najar said. The group wanted to be able to carry over subsidised water into the 2008 to 2009 water year.

It also wanted no more new plantings being used as a tax break, specifically by managed investment schemes, to go in until the industry is back to a “level playing field”. **No decisions arrived at during this meeting are the policy or sanctioned by the MDA.**

10th

FarmOnLine

Vic irrigation oasis on the brink of disaster

Mildura is an oasis. Drive in from the red dust and desert scrub and the green of the grapevines, gums and palms are a relief to the senses. There's a buzz about the place and a new pride in local food, wine, citrus-infused beer and the defeat of a proposed toxic waste dump. With its smart restaurants and sidewalk cafes, the main drag is more reminiscent of Melbourne's cashed-up Chapel Street than a frontier thoroughfare. Yet, founded on irrigation in the world's driest continent, the Sunraysia capital is as fragile as a city can be. A confluence of poor international food prices, deregulated water and drought have some locals warning that the oasis could dry up. "We've never been more vulnerable than we are now," says Henry Tankard, a community leader whose family has produced dried fruit in the area for 116 years. "A disaster is now happening." If it's a disaster, governments seem reluctant to stop it. Assorted drought relief is available to soften nature's assault, but politicians are less willing to intervene when something more sacred, the marketplace, is proving problematic. In response to the stripping of tariff protection and dwindling domestic outlets, a complacent farming sector has been forced to get meaner and leaner. Adjustment was necessary, including diversifying from a staple of dried fruit into table grapes, wine, citrus, olives and vegetables. But a slump in prices for core products such as dried fruit, wine grapes and citrus, worsened by the strong dollar, has hit locals hard. A report on prospects for local horticulture warns that poor market prices alone have put a fifth of local farms and \$117 million of production value at risk. The Californian Chaffey brothers founded Mildura as an irrigation colony in the late 1800s. Rights to pump Murray River water were attached to hundreds of small horticultural blocks. Mildura's vines were to get priority among the Murray's irrigators. That privilege has eroded over the past two decades with the gradual introduction of water trading. Then there is drought. Murray irrigators have had less than their full water allocation this year. Mildura growers are on 26pc. Farmers are free to buy each other's yearly share but with prices hitting record highs, above \$1000 a megalitre, those who are already in strife are more inclined to sell than buy. Local growers are angry that a water market that makes all players equal has made them anything but. Why? Because, unlike the rice and cotton farms that plant yearly, or dairy irrigators who can buy in feed rather than water pasture, grapes and citrus are "permanent" plantings that need water to stay alive. They take years to grow, and even longer to generate income. For many growers around Mildura, lack of water has meant the painful decision to cut back vines and trees to bare bones — which means they will take years to recover — or let them die. To save water for his core dried fruit crop, Mr. Tankard has sacrificed a grove of orange trees he planted in 1959. Both water use and water loss in the pump-irrigated farms around Mildura are a fraction of those upstream in the Goulburn area, where gravity pushes water along large channels and almost half is lost to seepage and evaporation. Sunraysia farmers say it is unfair that irrigators upstream are being rewarded for inefficiency with the State Government's \$1 billion Foodbowl Modernisation project, which aims to upgrade the old Goulburn infrastructure and share the savings between irrigators, the environment and Melbourne. A group of senior growers, including Mr. Tankard, have asked the Government to intervene; to shorten the watering season in the Goulburn area and to divert more of the savings from the Goulburn system downstream to avert the death of permanent plantings. They are offering to pay, although not the market rate. Water Minister Tim Holding told *The Age* the Government would not adopt the proposal. "It would have required the Victorian Government to favour one group of farmers, horticulturalists, over others like dairy farmers," Mr. Holding said. "The water market is better for fairly allocating scarce water resources by enabling water to be sold to the highest value use — a better outcome for both the buyer and the seller." Growers say matters are made worse by the new "unbundling" system that allows farmers to unhitch water rights from properties and sell them, leaving "dry blocks" which they say undermines property values and increases the costs of the shared pumping and distribution system for farmers still in the system. There is disagreement about just how shaky the local economy is. Mildura Deputy Mayor Vernon Knight says the city has overcome tough times before. He says only 20pc of the area's workforce is in agriculture. But another 25pc is in industries that service agriculture, and neither figure includes the thousands of casual pickers and packers so important to the local economy. Cr Knight says farmers should look at the drought as an opportunity — to look at planting new varieties of grapes. "I'm sick of chardonnay; everyone's sick of chardonnay." Mildura-based celebrity chef Stefano de Pieri says farmers should diversify further — especially with wine grape varieties. But for Henry Tankard the answer is more basic: water. Without it, the district's agriculture is finished. "And without agriculture, the source of life, the very heartbeat of a community dependent on irrigation, ceases." SOURCE: *The Age*, Melbourne, a Fairfax Media publication.

Telstra writes off Labor broadband plan

The Federal Government's \$4.7 billion broadband plan has been severely battered by comments today from Telstra chief, Sol Trujillo, who said his company, would never agree to a joint ownership program to build a national network. In March Labor promised to spend \$4.7 billion in partnership with the private sector for a fibre to the node network for 98 per cent of Australians in five years. But in an interview with *The Australian* newspaper, published today, Mr. Trujillo said the company would never agree to any form of joint ownership, which he described as a "kumbaya, holding hands" theory. "We are only going to participate in the things that we own and control," he says in the interview. Mr. Trujillo says Telstra would rather invest \$4 billion of its own money in a broadband network, but wants to call the shots on factors like pricing and regulation. SOURCE: Rural Press National News Service, Parliament House Bureau, Canberra.

La Nina revives land of flooding rains

The drought-breaking La Nina weather pattern has finally kicked in, bringing flooding rains along the eastern coast and filling the tributaries that feed into the parched Murray-Darling river system. Forecasters are predicting a wet summer and autumn but remain unwilling - at least officially - to call the end of the worst drought in living memory. And they warn it would still take rains of "biblical proportions" to fill the dams of cities and towns. As Adelaide sweltered through a 37C day that sparked bushfires across that State, the eastern States continued to enjoy good rainfall. One-in-20-year storms bucketed parts of Sydney and Wollongong yesterday, with 70mm falling in an hour in several suburbs. National Climate Centre head of climate analysis, David Jones, said the current event was a "classic La Nina", with warm, humid conditions and plenty of moisture in the atmosphere. The southern oscillation index - the standard indicator of pressure systems in the Pacific region - stands at plus 10, indicating a return to wetter conditions. Across the eastern half of Australia, a La Nina event became better established as sea surface temperatures dropped in the eastern Pacific and waters off Java became warmer than normal. The wettest conditions in a decade in western Queensland have put a spring in the step of locals and raised hopes that the Murray-Darling is in for a reprieve. The Bulloo Highway west of the township of Eulo has been cut for a week by the flooded Paroo River. Eulo general store owner, Gary Berghoefer, said it was "the best rain we've had in years". "The Paroo has been three or four kilometres wide in places. The rain will allow restocking on properties that have been hurting," he said. Murweh Shire Council chief executive, Chris Blanch, said Charleville had 160mm of rain during the past month. "Years of dust is being washed off everything. Plants and trees are sprouting new growth all over the place. It's a godsend," Mr. Blanch said. Warm water promotes convection and stronger westerly trade winds brought by La Nina blow moisture towards Australia, promising a return to good rainfall. The La Nina is expected to remain until about April. But Dr Jones warned that long-term rainfall deficiencies - especially around Melbourne, the Murray-Darling, Adelaide and southwest Western Australia - meant a return to full dams was "difficult to imagine". "Large reservoirs in the southeast have been drawn down during the past decade and at this stage it's difficult to imagine those returning to pre-drought conditions in any foreseeable time frame," Dr Jones said.

Marketing biggest factor in fine cotton's success

Marketing is the key factor for continued success of the extra fine cotton market, according to Eduard Hegetschweiler of Paul Reinhart AG, Switzerland. On a visit to Australia recently Mr. Hegetschweiler outlined to the Australian industry the threats and opportunities ahead for growers and marketers of Pima and Extra Long Staple (ELS) cotton. And he gave a clear warning to growers of the premium cotton: you must continue to innovate, or perish. The main reason is that premium upland varieties, or quality long staple cotton, will continue to nip at the heels of ELS. He added that unless ELS continued to innovate then it would lose ground. This means the creation of new products. "But it takes time to convince the textile chain that a new product is better and deserves a better price," he said. "And if no new products are created then existing products will be substituted by cheaper ones and under these circumstances the fine cotton market will not grow. "ELS varieties will be replaced by cheaper varieties - and that is definitely not what we are looking for." He warned that the ELS market was under threat already from increasing quality in regular varieties. These new and improved upland varieties (think 350B in Australia) are tipped to become the "bread and butter" of the future as the varieties improve, and traditional cottons could be relegated to discounted prices. Currently, roller ginned long staple upland is enjoying a premium over the traditional cotton market. "The premiums for roller ginned upland are 10-15c, maybe even somewhat more. "I see personally the premiums for roller ginned long staple upland in the near term - because it is new - at about 12-15c per pound. "Medium term I see 8-12c and long term 5-10c. That's my personal opinion." He also reminded the industry that premium fibres were not "essential" on the world stage. "Brand names may more and more replace quality.

NEWS.com.au - Nations bicker on 'green' trade

Rich and poor countries failed yesterday to agree on a plan to open up trade in green goods, with Brazil fearing a major US-EU proposal raised on the fringes of climate talks in Bali was a protectionist ruse. At the end of two days of talks involving officials from 32 nations, including 12 trade ministers, a final news conference descended into farce as Brazil and the United States swapped recriminations. The proposal involves cutting import tariffs on a list of 43 environmentally friendly goods, such as wind turbines and solar panels. If widely supported, it could lead to a global cut in greenhouse gas emissions blamed for climate change. "What there's no agreement on is the US-EU proposal," Brazil's Minister of External Relations, Celso Luiz Nunes Amorim, said. "I think this list is incomplete. It won't do much for climate change. It's not proven what the effect it will have on climate change, maybe a little bit here and there," Mr Amorim said. The trade officials were meeting for the first time on the sidelines of an annual UN climate conference, opening a new front in the global warming battle. About 20 finance ministers will also meet on Indonesia's resort island of Bali today and tomorrow. But the result from the weekend's talks was less than the United Nations and host Indonesia might have hoped.

heraldsun.com.au - Kevin Rudd to feel the heat at Bali climate change talks

Kevin Rudd will stride the world stage tomorrow when he arrives at climate change talks in Bali keen to play a lead role in the global greenhouse challenge. His diplomatic skills will be put to the test, with rich and poor nations already clashing over the pain that each should bear in a new climate change pact. Mr Rudd -- who ratified the Kyoto Protocol after being sworn in as Prime Minister last week -- wants to broker a deal between developed and developing nations. He discussed the strategy yesterday with New Zealand PM Helen Clark, who will be a key ally at the UN Climate Change Conference. "The move we've taken as Australia is to be part of the process for the first time, comprehensively," Mr Rudd said. "We've got obligations to the region and the planet. We take those very seriously. "This is going to be tough, full of hard negotiations, of course, but I'd rather be around the negotiating table than absent from the field." A draft proposal presented at the conference, co-written by Australia, says all nations must do more to fight climate change. It says rich countries must make deep cuts in emissions to avoid the worst outcomes, and developing nations should at least stem rising emissions. Mr. Rudd has rejected the cuts set out in the draft proposal, which calls for a 25-40 per cent reduction. The Rudd Government supports longer-term emissions cuts of 60 per cent by 2050. The Government will not set medium-term targets until a report by economist Ross Garnaut is completed next year. At the conference yesterday, poor nations objected to proposed tariff cuts for clean energy products, accusing rich countries of trying to profit from climate change. "This is obviously against us, because we have not the capacity to produce goods in the environmental friendly way," Pakistan delegate Ali Baz said. Environmental lobby group The Climate Institute yesterday called for Australia to back significant cuts to carbon emissions. Institute policy director Erwin Jackson said the draft proposal would help bridge the divide between developed and developing nations. "It puts in place a foundation to put us on a path to avoid dangerous climate change impacts," Mr Jackson said. Australia can play a really key role by supporting this decision."

Baby levy plan to offset carbon emissions

Families would pay a \$5000-plus baby levy at birth and an annual carbon tax of up to \$800 a child under a plan flagged in Australia's top medical journal. Every couple with more than two children would be taxed to pay for enough trees to offset the carbon emissions generated over each child's lifetime. Perth Assoc Prof Barry Walters outlines his proposal in yesterday's Medical Journal of Australia. He calls for condoms and greenhouse-friendly services such as sterilisation procedures to earn carbon credits for the user and prescriber.

Keep cool is the message

In a field as fast-moving as climate science, a lot can happen in a year, writes Roger Jones. Some of the information that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released this year is quickly going out of date. Trends in global air temperature, and sea level and atmospheric carbon dioxide are all tracking at or above the rates projected by the IPCC. Sea ice in the Arctic is at record minimum levels and ice melt on Greenland is a lot faster and more dynamic than as represented in scientific models of ice-sheet behaviour. The same is happening for CO2 emission rates. Fossil fuels are being burnt faster than projected and CO2 from forest clearing is higher than projected. A greater amount is staying in the atmosphere, implying the forests and oceans are becoming less efficient at absorbing CO2. At the same time, the world is seeing a boom in economic growth in India and China that is fuelling much of this emissions growth. Countries such as Australia that supply commodities to feed this growth are also enjoying the benefits. The global economy is growing faster than projected and this is expected to continue for decades. The emission scenarios that the IPCC is using are now a decade old. At the time of their release in 2000, they were state-of-the-art. Now, the world is growing faster and is richer than the scenario authors assumed. Last month, the International Energy Agency released its energy projections to 2030.

Prof Peter Sheehan and a team at Victoria University of Technology in Melbourne have been working for several years to quantify how much added CO₂ might come from the economic boom in India, China and other countries. The IEA release has had little impact on the team's figures. We are on track for a global warming of 1 degree between 1990 and 2030. If the world follows today's policies to 2030, far more greenhouse gases will be emitted than in any of the IPCC scenarios. This would commit the world to another 1.8 degree warming measured from 1990. Because world growth is moving faster than anticipated, solutions will have to be developed as quickly as possible to take us from this growth path towards a more sustainable one. With immediate action, by 2030 it may be possible to reduce warming by about 15 per cent, compared with the do-nothing case. However, by 2050, this could be a massive 40 per cent. Much has been written about the cost of emission reductions, but the benefits of avoiding damages due to climate change have been mostly overlooked. With Prof Sheehan and other economists, we are working on a triple bottom line approach, where economic, social and environmental costs are assessed separately. An environmental cost is when, at 1.8 degree warming, more than 80 per cent of the Great Barrier Reef would have no viable coral communities. The meaning is clear without converting it into dollars. An example of a social cost is when many poor people are harmed, but with low economic costs. Based on estimates from acknowledged scientific literature, Greenland has a greater than 40 per cent chance of experiencing significant melting. Millions of people will be vulnerable to sea level rise, in any case, and more if large ice caps begin to melt. Millions more will have no access to clean water. The literature suggests that with a 1.8-degree warming, direct economic costs might be 1-to-3 per cent of global GDP, but could become much larger at higher temperatures. How much? We don't know because we don't assess the costs of extreme events and large system changes very well. The worst of these damages can be avoided, the literature suggests, by forgoing a few per cent in economic growth to shift the economy from high to low carbon. This might delay economic growth by one year in 2050, in an economy that would be perhaps 2.5 times larger than today's. The IPCC is now discussing the development of a new set of emission scenarios planned for completion in five to seven years. This sets up another dilemma. Often, scientists do not like to release their results until they are confident of the outcome. Important decisions need to be made now and cannot wait another five to seven years. Scientists will have to leave their comfort zone and communicate their findings on emerging risks, even when scientific confidence in those findings may be low. If I knew that my house definitely faced long-term damage that could be severe but was highly uncertain, I might want to spend a couple of per cent of my income on insurance. The recent scientific mail suggests I need that insurance much earlier than expected. Sometimes, it is worth taking some risks in the short term to avoid worse risks down the track. We have spent too long being risk-averse about short-term costs and ignored the benefits of avoiding long-term damages. Benefits that could be enjoyed by us, our children and many future generations. Don't be put off by the unknown. As a researcher, I can confidently predict that we will learn more by doing than we will by waiting. ROGER JONES is a Principal Research Scientist with CSIRO who works on assessing and managing climate risks and was a co-ordinating lead author of the recent IPCC Fourth Assessment Report.

Couriermail.com - Rudd against drastic cuts in carbon emissions

The Prime Minister is resisting mounting pressure for Australia to support big cuts in carbon emissions at climate change talks in Bali this week. Kevin Rudd, who will arrive in Indonesia tomorrow, has stepped up his argument that it would be irresponsible for Australia to back a target, warning of "hard negotiations" ahead. His caution came despite New Zealand leader Helen Clark saying the Bali conference was moving towards a 25 per cent to 40 per cent cut for developed nations. New Zealand ratified the Kyoto Protocol in December 2002. "Nothing has been really signed-off on as a negotiation yet, but that's where it's heading," Ms Clark said after talks with Mr Rudd at his house in Brisbane. A draft proposal at the United Nations conference in Bali yesterday said all nations must do more to fight climate change, and rich countries must make deep cuts in emissions by 2020 to avoid the worst impacts. The four-page draft, written by delegates from Indonesia, Australia and South Africa as an unofficial guide for delegates, said developing nations should at least brake rising emissions as part of a new pact. Environmental groups are ramping up the pressure on the Government to back the push. "Australia can show real leadership in making this deal happen," said Erwin Jackson, of The Climate Institute. Australian Conservation Foundation spokesman Tony Mohr said it was disappointing Australia was not being more active. Mr. Rudd yesterday said Australia had already taken a huge step by moving to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, his first act as Prime Minister, and attending the Bali meeting. "This is going to be tough, full of hard negotiations of course, but I'd rather be around the negotiating table than absent from the field," Mr Rudd said. Opposition environment spokesman Greg Hunt backed the Government. "They shouldn't be pledging until they know what the impact on Australia would be," Mr Hunt said. In a separate development, a State Government scheme aims to offset the carbon emissions of Queensland's high-flying ministers and public servants. Premier Anna Bligh will today unveil plans to offset the carbon produced from all domestic and international commercial air travel taken by ministers and their department staff.

The State Government clocks up more than 200 million kilometres in domestic travel each year, along with 14 million kilometres in international travel. It is hoped the state's scheme will offset 32,000 tonnes of CO₂ each year at a cost of \$350,000.

Willing to pay to go green

Australians strongly support a carbon emissions trading scheme and would be discouraged from working for, investing in or buying from companies with poor environmental standards, a survey says. CPA Australia, one of the world's largest accounting bodies, said it surveyed 300 members of the public, 200 senior company executives, 100 auditors and 44 institutional investors and fund managers. It found 79 per cent supported the introduction of a carbon emissions trading scheme within five years. The new Federal Government has pledged to launch an emissions trading scheme by 2010. The survey also showed 91 per cent of members of the public wanted companies' water usage to be made public. The survey showed an unfavourable environmental reputation was a major liability for any company, with 86 per cent of people saying they would be discouraged from working for a company with a poor environmental reputation. And 85 per cent of the public respondents said they wouldn't invest in a company with a poor environmental reputation, while 85 per cent also said they wouldn't buy its products or services. "These findings send a clear message to business – sustainability issues matter, ignore them at your peril," CPA Australia chief executive Geoff Rankin said.

Adelaidenow.com – NZ an asset on 'climate goals'

Australia's friendship with New Zealand will be an asset in international negotiations for a post-Kyoto emissions target, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd says. For his first meeting with a foreign leader as Prime Minister, Mr Rudd chose a casual lunch with New Zealand counterpart Helen Clark at his Brisbane home. The pair discussed climate change ahead of the Bali summit, where Mr Rudd arrives on Tuesday. "We'll be in close contact as governments on the challenges we face with climate change, the challenges we face with Bali, plus the negotiating agenda over the next couple of years – it's going to be a tough, hard negotiation," Mr Rudd said. "But when you've friends with common interests, then we can work these things through." New Zealand ratified the Kyoto Protocol in December 2002. Its delegation in Bali has agreed to support a cut in greenhouse gas emissions of between 25 and 40 per cent by 2020. Mr Rudd's first act as Prime Minister last week was to ratify the Kyoto Protocol but he will not set a 2020 target until next year when he receives a report from economist Ross Garnaut into emissions trading and the impact of interim targets. Ms Clark said she was delighted Mr Rudd had made time to meet her before travelling to Bali, to ensure all of the issues were on his "radar screen". "From New Zealand's point of view, we would like to see out of that negotiation a long-term emissions goal agreed on which is comprehensive and everybody needs to be in on that," Ms Clark said. "One of the critical negotiations for all of us is going to be when it's finally agreed, what the countries' emissions reduction goal should be, how that is then distributed across Australia, New Zealand, EU, Japan, Russia, Canada. That is a discussion that is yet to be had."

River Murray Drought Team - Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation

Storage volumes are currently 550 GL lower than at the same time last year. Increased flow rates will be observed over summer by preferentially drawing on the downstream storages - firstly Lake Victoria, then Hume and lastly Dartmouth Reservoir. All efforts are being made to delivery water more efficiently, including lowering weir pools to reduce evaporative losses in order to conserve as much water as possible in Dartmouth Reservoir. The Bureau of Meteorology states that a La Nina event is now well established and was starting to have its effects felt in Australia. Water quality across much of the Murray River remains good however there is an increased threat of algal blooms and higher salinity, particularly in South Australia due to lower flow rates - the flow at the border is currently 3 500 ML/day compared to the normal minimum daily Entitlement Flow for December of 7 000 ML/day.

Murray Darling Basin Commission – Press Release

Record Murray-Darling Basin - Drought continues to bite

The worst drought on record is continuing to bite hard throughout Australia's food bowl. That's the core message of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission's latest two-monthly Drought Update issued today. Speaking at Hume Dam today, Chief Executive Dr Wendy Craik AM said very hot weather arrived early in November, with temperatures up to 6 degrees above average for much of the southern part of the Basin. She said total Murray storage was now around 550 GL lower than this time last year and less than 1 percent of divertible water was available for critical environmental watering to protect endangered species and habitats. "At the end of November total storage was around 1885 GL – the lowest for this time of year since 1940. At this time last year, storage totalled 2435 GL," Dr Craik said. While there had been good rainfall in November, higher temperatures, evaporation and lower runoff kept inflows well below average. Inflows over the 2006/07 water year were just 55% of the previous minimum on record.

The two years to the end of November were the lowest two-year inflows on record. “Now that summer demands are rising, we need to increase flow rates across the river system by preferentially drawing on downstream storages – first Lake Victoria, then Hume and lastly Dartmouth Reservoir. Our overall aim will be to supply water to users as efficiently as possible, while having as much water as possible stored in Dartmouth Reservoir at the end of the coming irrigation season,” Dr Craik said. Dr Michael Coughlan, Head of the Bureau of Meteorology’s National Climate Centre, said the La Niña event was now well established and was starting to have its effects felt in Australia. “The chances of exceeding the median rainfall for summer are between 60 and 70% in a large area extending from southeast Queensland across both the northern inland and east of NSW,” he said. “However temperatures are likely to be higher than average resulting in higher evaporation.” Dr Craik said that while water quality across much of the Murray River was high, the continuing drought increased the threat of algal blooms and of higher salinity, particularly in South Australia. In addition, the increased risk of acid sulphate soil reactions in disconnected wetlands will be closely monitored. “However, while flows, river levels and some weirs pools will be lower than normal, much of the river will experience conditions similar to last year,” she said.

The Australian - Carbon trading by 2010 'is achievable'

Australia’s commitment to set up a carbon-trading scheme by 2010 is ambitious but achievable, economist Ross Garnaut says. Professor Garnaut is researching and compiling a report for Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on emissions trading and its impacts. The report, due to be released in June, will form the basis of the government’s carbon-emissions targets. Prof Garnaut said Australia’s commitment to begin a carbon-trading scheme by 2010 was ambitious but achievable. “I think that’s a practical objective although it won’t be easy and it’ll require a lot of work in a short period of time,” he told ABC Radio today. “But it’s important that we get there as soon as possible and I think those timetables are achievable.” Mr Rudd is due to attend the United Nations climate-change talks in Bali tomorrow along with Treasurer Wayne Swan, Climate Change Minister Penny Wong and Environment Minister Peter Garrett. Prof Garnaut said one of the top priorities of the Australian contingent was to ensure any climate-change policies were consistent over long periods of time. “It’s going to be very important that the world - and Australia as part of the world - thinks through what is going to be a sustainable basis for steady long-term policies,” he said. “There’s going to be no quick fix - it’s going to take a lot of long-term structural change.” Prof Garnaut said the Bali talks would only set a framework for discussions on climate change with no binding targets, despite pressure on developed nations to agree to cut emissions by 25 to 40 per cent by 2020. “That’s a range, that’s there for consideration but no-one expects this meeting in Bali to reach agreement on anything like that,” he said. “A new government in Australia recently re-joining the international effort through signing Kyoto will be understood if it says that it is going to take its time.” AAP

'Per person' greenhouse emissions fall

Greenhouse gas emissions per person are falling and water consumption has been scaled back as environmental consciousness rises in Australia. An Australian Bureau of Statistic snapshot released today found that by 2005 while total emissions were 2.2 per cent above 1990 levels, emissions per person had fallen by 14 per cent. Even before the latest drought took grip on the east coast of Australia, water consumption was also falling, down 14 per cent in the between July 2001 and July 2005. One in five households has a rainwater tank, the ABS reports. Australian greenhouse gas emissions are now rising rapidly putting pressure on the Kyoto target of average of 8 per cent above 1990 levels for the period 2008 -2012. Unless there are changes in policy emissions, by 2020 emissions would be 27 per cent higher than according to official predictions. In 2005-6 coal accounted for 41.6 per cent of energy production, while renewable energy sources, such as wind, hydro-electricity and solare energy represented 5 per cent. The Rudd Government wants to have 20 per cent of Australia’s energy produced from renewable sources by 2020. Several cycles of drought over the decade to 2005-6 had it toll on hydroelectricity production, down 7 per cent.

Adelaide.now.com - Reservoir 'threat' to plants

Conservationists have warned the expansion of Mt Bold reservoir will lead to the extinction of a native species. The State Government wants to double the size of Mt Bold reservoir, from 45 gegalitres to 90 gegalitres, to help meet Adelaide’s demand for water for two years instead of one. The reserve surrounding the reservoir is home to the only known South Australian population of the skeleton fork-fern, a native plant, listed as an endangered species under the SA National Parks and Wildlife Act. Under the State Government’s plan, the water level of the reservoir will be increased by 50 metres. Nature Conservation Society of South Australia threatened plant action group co-ordinator Tim Jury said this will flood the area in which the skeleton fork-fern grows and cause it to become extinct in SA. "The Mt Bold population inhabits a cliff just two metres above the current water line and is the only occurrence of this species in South Australia," he said.

"Increasing the water level would therefore mean causing the extinction of this species from South Australia, a clear contravention of the State Government's own No Species Loss strategy." The No Species Loss strategy aims to prevent any more of South Australia's threatened species from becoming extinct. Water Security minister Karlene Maywald said feasibility studies are now underway into the expansion and the environmental effects will be taken into account in the planning process. Greens MLC Mark Parnell said the skeleton fork-fern is not protected by law, despite being listed endangered under state legislation. However, he urged the Government to scrap the plan in the interests of protecting biodiversity and the other 600 native plant species in the area. "The Mt Bold region is an incredibly important biodiversity reservoir for SA," he said. "The potential loss of species is simply not worth the risk."

Viability study: Coal project powers ahead

A study on the viability of a \$3.7 billion power plant and mine in the State's Far North should be completed early next year. London-based Altona Resources said last week it had made "solid progress" on a pre-feasibility study on the project and should be able to report back in the first three months of 2008. The project involves a 10 million tonne-per-annum open-cut coal mine, a coal to liquids plant producing 10 million barrels of fuel per year and a 560 megawatt power station, the second largest in the state if it were built. If the project were approved, which would be after a later definitive feasibility study, it would be built in two phases over 4 1/2 years, with the process taking seven to 10 years to complete. The company expected to finish drilling at the Arckaringa Basin site by the end of the year in an attempt to ensure there was enough coal to justify the operation. Altona chairman Chris Lambert said the coal to liquids process converted coal into more environmentally friendly energy sources such as gas and synthetic fuels. The real attraction was SA's need for power. "According to official forecasts of electricity supply and demand by the South Australian Electricity Supply Industry Planning Council, South Australia is facing a 'reserve' supply deficit of over 500MW by 2016," he said. "This does not include the more than 500MW of new power demand from BHP Billiton's Olympic Dam expansion project and other new mineral-based developments planned for the next decade. The state also imports all its petroleum fuel requirements, which are set to rise rapidly on the back of these developments." The company believes once payment for the electricity was factored in, its production costs for diesel would be about \$US20 a barrel. "This would place the project at the very low end of CTL industry operating cost benchmarks and indicates that it could make operating profits under virtually all future oil price forecasting scenarios," Mr Lambert said. The project even could become a water supplier, with mine de-watering expected to produce a surplus. Altona also has signed a memorandum of understanding with FreightLink to transport liquid fuels from the project on the Adelaide to Darwin railway. An application by Babcock and Brown and NP Power to build a 450MW gas-fired peaking power station at Redbanks, near Mallala, was approved by the Development Assessment Commission in June.

Will we ever learn? The cars that ate Adelaide

Adelaide has been named Australia's most car-dominated city, with more people driving to work per head of population than any other Australian capital. A university of Melbourne study revealed that 320,735 South Australians (or 75.4 per cent) drove to work each day while another 28,375 people (6.7 per cent) travelled as a passenger. Perth followed closely behind with 75 per cent of people driving to work, followed by Melbourne with 73 per cent and Canberra with 72.3 per cent. Sydney had the lowest percentage with only 63.4 per cent of people driving to work. The study, which looked at how people travelled to work from 1976 to 2006, also found that only nine per cent of people in Adelaide used public transport. The report listed Government's failure to spend enough money on public transport as the reason for the increase in drivers. "Adelaide remains dominated by road construction, with public transport and walking very much an afterthought," it says. "Adelaide is now the only capital city with a suburban rail system that has not been electrified. "As a result car driving has increased faster than in any other city ... and is now the highest in the nation."

Rudd's climate change pledge

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd says he is determined to show leadership on climate change, but will not be setting emissions targets without careful consideration. Mr Rudd goes to the Indonesian island of Bali tomorrow to take part in a UN climate change conference, in which it is hoped a roadmap for negotiations for a new agreement once the Kyoto Protocol commitment period ends in 2012 will be agreed to. In Brisbane today, Mr Rudd denied the conference would be a failure if no agreement was reached on emission targets, and said Australia was a leader on climate change despite the government not setting any targets. He said his government was following a series of steps in its policy on climate change, beginning with ratifying the Kyoto protocol, and then being part of negotiations in Bali. "I would not have taken the decision to proceed with the ratification of Kyoto unless as prime minister of Australia I was determined to show leadership in this area," Mr Rudd told reporters. "I intend to show leadership in this area, and it will be done on the basis of sober, careful decision making on the way through."

The government would wait for the completion of a report by economist Ross Garnaut, expected in June, before committing to emissions targets, Mr Rudd said. "As I said prior to the election, when it comes to the determination of our targets, they will be driven by the outcomes of the Garnaut report which Labor had the foresight to commission six months before the election." The timing of the completion of the Garnaut report would fit in with the timetable expected to be drawn up in Bali, Mr Rudd said. The prime minister said he planned to meet with Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono while in Bali to build relations between the two countries. "I place the highest priority on Australia's relationship with Indonesia," he said. "We are not just neighbours, we are partners in so many common challenges, not least of which is the common challenge of regional terrorism." Mr Rudd said he also would be meeting with his "old friend" Robert Zoellick, the president of the World Bank, to discuss Australia's official developmental assistance in the coming years. "On top of that I will also be meeting with my old friend Al Gore, and we've promised to have a celebratory drink," Mr Rudd said. Mr. Rudd said he would return from his trip at the end of the week.

11th
AWA

1. The 1st Asia-Pacific Water Summit (APWS) was held in Beppu, Japan on 3-4 December. AWA Chief Executive Tom Mollenkopf gave a presentation at the IWA-JWWA International Workshop on Governance and Regulation in Water Services. Key recommendations from the summit focused on achieving Millennium Development Goals through water financing and capacity development, dealing with water related disasters, and water for development and ecosystems.
2. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has set out a wide-ranging agenda for his first meeting of COAG with state and territory leaders in Melbourne on December 20, as part of a mission to WATER, education, infrastructure and business deregulation. In particular, he is looking for harmonising policies and regulations and ending the "blame game".
3. More than half of Australian households use greywater, with Victorians leading the way, according to a new report by the ABS. Other findings include that the majority of Australian households are undertaking water saving activities.
4. The Australian Water Association is growing and needs two enthusiastic people to join the team. If you are interested in becoming the Community Education Coordinator or Australasian Biosolids Partnership Program Manager please contact AWA.
5. Companies that have contributed to pollution elimination or reduced freshwater consumption through innovative programs, policies, processes or products now have the opportunity to be nominated for the prestigious 2008 Stockholm Industry Water Award.
6. The Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz International Prize for Water rewards efforts undertaken by innovative engineers and scientists as well as applied organisations in water resources worldwide.
7. The SA Government will double the dam capacity in the Mt Lofty Ranges, and spend \$300 mil to build inter-connector pipes linking Adelaide's southern and northern water systems. Combined with the \$1.1bn 50GL planned desalination plant, these initiatives mean water prices for residents are projected to rise by 13 per cent.
8. Drought-breaking La Nina weather pattern has finally kicked in, bringing flooding rains along the eastern coast to fill the Murray-Darling River system. Forecasters are predicting a wet summer and autumn but remain to be convinced to call the end of the worst drought in living memory.
9. ICE WaRM and partners have won the Business/Higher Education Round Table (B-HERT) 2007 Award for Outstanding International Collaboration in Education and Training, for the professional development programme with China's Yellow River Conservancy Commission (YRCC).
10. Welsh Water has unveiled plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50%. The not-for-profit sewerage company has published its vision for the company 25 years in the future - with the goal of delivering the best possible value services for customers.
11. A think tank set up two years ago to look at greater water efficiency in the UK will continue to operate throughout 2008 because of initial success in driving savings innovations The think tank - The Water Saving Group - brings together Ofwat, the Environment Agency, the Consumer council for Water, Defra, Water UK, Waterwise and communities and local government.
13. SA Minister for Consumer Affairs, Jennifer Rankine, is warning people not to have any business dealings with unlicensed contractor Maurice Robinson, who has previously been prosecuted by Consumer Affairs for unlicensed building work. He currently resides in Port Augusta, but is placing advertisements in metropolitan Adelaide newspapers advertising rainwater tanks.

14. Water Quality Research Australia has been established, with 40 members representing state-owned utilities, regulators, the private sector and research institutions. Its first major project has begun; \$2m (\$1m from the National Water Commission) to develop a biomonitoring 'toolbox' for recycled water.
15. The NSW Government has announced \$70 million in funding for two climate change and renewable energy programs.
16. Victoria's water consumption has been slashed almost 30% since the introduction of government rebates for installing rainwater tanks and water-saving devices.
17. Water storage levels at Sydney's dams currently stand at 58.5% per cent, which is the highest in four years. Sydney Water says it will operate Kurnell desalination but plans to turn it off when water storage levels reached 70 to 80%.

FarmOnLine

Fears of rogue water traders as deals stall

Massive delays in processing water trades and escalating water prices are delivering rivers of cash into the hands of dozens of small unregulated water brokers, creating a financial time bomb for irrigators. The Bondi Group of private irrigation companies estimate as much as \$100 million dollars could be languishing in the hands of the many individuals and companies who have rushed to hang out their shingle as a water broker to capitalise on the water trading boom. But these traders who are under no obligation to establish trust accounts or take out indemnity insurance. Both irrigation companies and the fledgling Australian Water Brokers Association (AWBA) warn it is a matter of time before the cash proves too tempting for someone and they skip the country, leaving drought-stricken irrigators out of water and out of pocket. The Bondi Group met with water authorities, the AWBA and State and Federal department officials in Mildura last week calling for greater regulation of brokers and for a radical overhaul of processing procedures to cut turnaround times for water trades back to a week. Bondi Group secretary and Coleambally Irrigation Co-operative chief executive, Murray Smith, says red tape and a dramatic rise in the number of trades is stalling trades for up to two to three months, allowing huge sums of money to build up in the hands of brokers. "The larger brokers hold it in trust accounts with certain conditions and a lot of brokers are also real estate or stock agents and they may also have trust accounts," he said. "But in many cases they are just farmers. In our view it is a matter of time before one of them thinks 'I have \$10m in my bank account. Brazil looks good.' "What we are trying to do is to remove that risk." SOURCE: Extract from full story to appear in *Stock & Land*, Vic, December 13 issue.

Rain brings no reprieve for Murray-Darling inflows

Despite the shift to a La Nina cycle and good falls across much of NSW and southern Queensland, the worst drought on record is continuing to bite hard throughout the Murray Darling Basin. The Murray-Darling Basin Commission's has today released its latest two-monthly Drought Update, which says that despite good rainfall in November, higher temperatures, evaporation and lower runoff kept inflows well below average. Speaking at the Hume Dam today, MDBC chief executive Dr Wendy Craik said hot weather during November was up to six degrees above average for much of the southern part of the Basin. Dr Craik said less than 1pc of divertible water was available for critical environmental watering to protect endangered species and habitats. "At the end of November total storage was around 1885GL – the lowest for this time of year since 1940," she said. "At this time last year, storage totalled 2435GL." And inflows over the 2006/07 water year were just 55pc of the previous minimum on record. The two years to the end of November were the lowest two-year inflows on record. "Now that summer demands are rising, we need to increase flow rates across the river system by preferentially drawing on downstream storages – first Lake Victoria, then Hume and lastly Dartmouth Reservoir," Dr Craik said. "Our overall aim will be to supply water to users as efficiently as possible, while having as much water as possible stored in Dartmouth Reservoir at the end of the coming irrigation season." SOURCE: MDBC and *FarmOnline*.

Refer No 8 above.

Cotton – Rains bring welcome relief for some Qld irrigators

Rain in Central and Southern Queensland in recent weeks has brought a reprieve for irrigators in some of Queensland's key cotton growing regions. At St George the Beardmore Dam is full for the first time since 2005. And while it comes after the official close of the Bollgard planting window, it is expected that some growers may plant small areas of conventional cotton. Flows into Coolmunda Dam, supplying the Macintyre scheme near Inglewood increased the storage level from 23pc to 57pc. In Central Queensland, good rains in the Dawson River catchment have taken most of the major weirs that supply irrigation and mining needs in the Moura and Theodore areas to 100pc. The Fairbairn Dam at Emerald has increased from 17pc to 25pc and the Claude Wharton and John Goleby weirs in the upper Burnett have increased to 39pc and 36pc respectively. Storages that have yet to receive any respite include those in the Callide Valley (Biloela), Central & Lower Lockyer, Warrill Valley (Boonah), Logan River (Beaudesert area), lower sections of the Upper Burnett including the Boyne.

Three Moon Creek (Gayndah, Mundubbera & Monto areas), Barker Barambah (Murgon to Gayndah area), the Upper Condamine (Warwick to Dalby areas), and the lower Burnett (Bundaberg and Isis areas). The Bureau of Meteorology has confirmed that the La Nina weather pattern has now developed, with the chances of exceeding median rainfall for summer are between 60pc and 70pc in a large area extending from southeast Queensland across both the northern inland and east of NSW. SOURCE: *Australian Cotton Outlook*.

Horticulture - Horticulture industry receives drought support boost

A Centrelink officer is to be posted with the Horticulture Australia Council, the industry's peak body, to assist in delivering drought support to struggling producers. HAC chair, Stuart Swaddling, says the help will be timely given the current grim situation in the lower Murray Darling Basin, where many irrigators are being forced to turn off the taps and bulldoze blocks of orchards and vineyards. "The lower Basin is fast becoming a mosaic of bare blocks, dying trees and vines, and growing plantings," Mr. Swaddling said. "Our people aren't used to taking hand-outs from the Government; nor are they familiar with all the criteria and the plethora of forms. "Centrelink's Murray Darling Basin Unit have kindly offered to outpost their new Canberra-based rural service officer to HAC for two days a week for the next few months." David Green will be joining HAC from December 17 on Tuesdays and Thursdays until the middle of February, when the situation will be reviewed. Mr. Green will be providing advice and support to peak industry bodies who have queries about drought assistance on behalf of their members; and also to growers direct. * For drought assistance contact David Green on (02) 6273 8115. SOURCE: HAC and *The Land*, NSW, weekly rural newspaper, posting news updates daily on *FarmOnline*.

Spring property market the worst in decade

The rural property market has suffered its worst spring selling season in more than a decade, due to drought and the rising dollar. According to today's *The Australian Financial Review*, bidder numbers at spring auctions dropped by a factor of six to one; and clearance rates were under 50pc as sellers over-priced their property. *AFR* quotes Meares and Associates chief executive, Chris Meares, who said the market was "extremely tough and depressed" due to the drought. "It is believed that the success rate this year will be under 50pc, which would be the lowest recorded success rate for the past decade," Mr. Meares told *AFR*. Colliers International rural property director, Chris Todd, said the middle-range and smaller in particular had lost value.

The Australian - Results of Bali to take 'years'

Kevin Rudd has further distanced Australia from scientific calls for deep greenhouse gas emission cuts and declared that the results of the UN climate conference in Bali would not be felt for at least two years. As the Prime Minister prepared to fly out this morning to the conference, he said the purpose of the Bali summit was to agree "on a road map for the next couple of years, within which countries then embark upon long-term commitment". Mr Rudd said yesterday there were a range of issues to address before agreeing to international targets, including considering a report by Ross Garnaut on the impacts of emission cuts. "The challenge for Bali is to make sure that everyone enters on to the same page for negotiations over the next two years," Mr Rudd said in Brisbane. Professor Garnaut said last night it was unlikely the key players in Bali would pressure Mr Rudd to immediately commit to a post-Kyoto target. "I don't think that serious participants in the international process will expect the new Australian Government, just a week after being signed in, to go further than what the Rudd Government is prepared to go," he said. The summit has already heard calls for cuts from developed countries of between 25 and 40 per cent, which Mr Rudd said would not necessarily be binding on Australia. "First and foremost within Australia, we have the Garnaut report, which is not due to report until the middle of next year," he said. "That's an important and sober way to consider appropriate interim targets for Australia and we will wait, as is appropriate, for the conclusion of that report before we start making any determinations along those lines." Before the election, the states commissioned Professor Garnaut to look at a carbon trading system and other cuts, which would reduce Australia's contribution to greenhouse gases. There have been suggestions at the summit, designed to provide a direction for negotiations, that interim targets of 25 to 30 per cent cuts by 2020 be adopted in Bali. But yesterday, Mr Rudd said these figures had been arrived at "on the basis of the deliberations of technical officers", which had not been accepted by governments as targets either individually or collectively. Environment Minister Peter Garrett, the first of Australia's six ministers to arrive in Bali, was doing his best not to contradict his leader yesterday. Mr Garrett met US senator and failed Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry but admitted he would not be discussing the issue of targets. He was leaving that to Mr Rudd and Climate Change Minister Penny Wong, who was due to arrive in Bali late last night. Mr Rudd said: "Australia has taken its head out of the sand and it now wants to be part of the solution, not just part of the problem. Step number one from the Government of Australia has been to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. We hadn't done that before. "Step number two is to be fully around the negotiating tables in Bali, to be part of the negotiating process. Step number three is to agree on a negotiating timetable. We believe we can make constructive steps forward in each of those areas.

"As I said prior to the election, when it comes to the determination of our targets, they will be driven by the outcomes of the Garnaut report, which Labor had the foresight to commission six months before this election." UN Convention on Climate Change chief Yvo de Boer last night backed the inclusion of targets, saying it would help provide investment certainty. "That is going to be a critical part of the discussion on the future, and it's in the interests of everyone that we walk away from here with a clear sense of where we think this process is going to take us," he said. Environmentalists have been lobbying the Rudd Government to back the reference to targets to show Australia is serious about acting on climate change beyond its symbolic ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. "It's incredibly important the negotiating range of 25 to 40 per cent emission reductions stays in the text," said Greenpeace campaigns manager Steve Campbell. In what has emerged as the most divisive issue of the two-week negotiations in Bali, the US is leading a campaign to have the paragraph omitted from the draft before it is presented to environment ministers at high-level meetings starting tomorrow. The US says the introduction of a non-binding reference to rich countries needing to reduce emissions by between 25 and 40 per cent by 2020 predetermines the two-year negotiations on a new global climate deal after 2012. As reported by The Australian last week, the umbrella group of non-European developed countries chaired by Australia has been split by the draft text, which is backed by Europe and the UN, but has been opposed by the US, Japan and Canada. All eyes will be on the Australian delegation to see if it will break from siding with the US, with activists pressuring the Rudd Government to back its election rhetoric on climate change. A spokesman for the Australian delegation said Canberra's position on the emission targets would be determined by Senator Wong when she arrived, even though Mr Garrett arrived in Bali yesterday. He said he could not articulate the Australian government position on the reference to targets. Some developing countries may also side with the US as they are unhappy with the draft's stipulation that emissions need to be reduced to below half of 2000 levels by 2050, fearing this may open the door to having binding targets imposed on them. US lead negotiator Harlan Watson said yesterday the US was keen to start negotiating a new deal after the summit, but Washington was not alone in its opposition to the inclusion of specific numbers and targets in the draft text. Professor Garnaut said Australia's commitment to begin a carbon-trading scheme by 2010 was ambitious but achievable.

Food, water more important: Heffernan

Climate change negotiators in Bali should be putting more effort into how governments will deal with the effects of global warming on food production and water supplies. Farmer and former Liberal parliamentary secretary Bill Heffernan says the changes that science had already predicted for the atmosphere required an immediate focus on how people will survive. He said that it was unfortunate that the focus on carbon emissions distracted from the arguably more difficult problems of water and food management. While much money was spent modelling energy needs there was not enough modelling of food production. He said if the projections that one-third of arable land and half of all water supplies were under threat were borne out it would place enormous pressure on all governments. "I am not sure what the answers are but in the next 50 years one billion people will be short of food," he said. "This is a survival issue and no-one is talking about it." An Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resources Economics released on Friday said that using existing technologies, climate change would shave 2.3 per cent off growth by 2030 and as much as 5 per cent lower than might be otherwise expected by 2050. Beef production would be 20 per cent lower, dairy production 18 per cent and wheat production 13 per cent. Senator Heffernan said he agreed with the Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty that climate change would be the greatest threat to national sovereignty over the coming century. He said Australia was in a "fantastic position" to deal with change and was heartened that Rudd Labor was prepared to take seriously his work under the former government on boosting agriculture in northern Australia.

No heat on Rudd at summit: Garnaut

Key participants in the Bali climate change negotiations will not pressure Kevin Rudd to immediately commit to a post-Kyoto carbon-emissions target, economist Ross Garnaut says. Professor Garnaut is conducting a study into emissions trading and the impact of interim targets, and is due to give a draft report to the federal Government in June. He will join the Australian delegation at the Bali conference tomorrow, where he will meet with British economist Nicholas Stern. Last year, Sir Nicholas's review for the British Treasury warned that the economic impact of climate change could be worse than the combined cost of both world wars. Professor Garnaut said last night Australia would not be seen as being on the outer if it refused to support an emissions reduction target range of between 25 and 40 per cent by 2020 at the Bali summit. He said the Prime Minister should not be pressured to commit to a target so soon after ratifying the Kyoto Protocol. "I think the international community recognises that something big happened in Australia a couple of weeks ago," he told ABC television.

"Australia now has a government that is firmly committed to a target by 2050. It's a big target; it's in the ballpark of commitments by other developed countries. That is respected and taken seriously.

"I don't think that serious participants in the international process will expect the new Australian Government, just a week after being signed in, to go further than what the Rudd Government is prepared to go." Professor Garnaut said now was not the time to commit to a target and that the purpose of the Bali conference was to set a timetable for further negotiations. "Australia recognises that this is a serious problem, we've got to play a serious part in the solution," he said. "We'll do that, but now ... is not the time to be definitive with numbers." Professor Garnaut said Australians would feel the pinch at their hip pockets regardless of the specifics of the agreed target. "Overall, for the economy as a whole, for the society as a whole, there will be pain," he said. "If we are wise in policy, we will put in place mechanisms that minimise the adjustment costs to low-income households. "That will make the politics of transition more palatable but, above all, it will make the ... system more equitable." Professor Garnaut will address a special Queensland cabinet meeting today before flying to Bali. Queensland Premier Anna Bligh yesterday announced measures to cut emissions - about 314,000 tonnes of carbon a year by 2017 - through government transport and buildings. Government buildings will be carbon-neutral by 2020, the car fleet reduced and replaced with more environmentally friendly vehicles, and government agencies forced to purchase carbon offsets for all air travel, at a cost of about \$350,000 a year. Professor Garnaut is a professor of economics at the Australian National University in Canberra. He was the Australian ambassador to China from 1985 to 1988 after serving as the senior economics adviser to then Labor prime minister Bob Hawke.

Renewable energy lags in power stakes

Renewable energy has become the increasingly poor cousin of fossil fuels, growing at less than a 10th of the rate of non-renewable sources of power over the last generation. An Australian Bureau of Statistics report released yesterday underlined the challenge facing the sector in a post-Kyoto environment, with just 5 per cent of the nation's power sourced from hydro, solar, wind and other clean energy. From 1975-76 to 2005-06, production of black coal, natural gas and other non-renewables has jumped by a massive 415 per cent. Over the same period, growth in renewables rose by a far slower 31 per cent, its report notes. Even in the past five years, when the focus has been firmly fixed on greenhouse emissions, "the mix of fuels used to provide energy has changed little", the report said. By 2005, Australia's emission levels had risen 2.2 per cent above 1990 levels - within the 8 per cent increase allowed under its Kyoto commitments between 2008 and 2012. On a per capita basis, Australians were emitting 17.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide, compared with 11 tonnes for the rest of the OECD. The nation's energy use has more than doubled since the mid-1970s. But it has lagged gross domestic product growth since the 1990s, as consumption becomes more efficient and the economy shifts towards less energy-hungry sectors such as services. As a result, emissions per person have edged downward over the medium term, falling by 14 per cent between 1990 and 2005, partly because of cuts to land clearing rates, preventing the escape of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. In the past five years, mining has posted the strongest growth in energy consumption, up 50 per cent, followed by manufacturing (14 per cent) and farming (9 per cent). Households recorded a more modest 6 per cent rise, but their cars contributed to transport's status as the biggest single energy user. The average Australian's price sensitivity could also have become a barrier to change. The report observed that people were more aware of green power schemes in 2005 than previous years but "less willing to pay extra for green power than previously".

Insurers under a cloud after superstorm

Hailstones the size of cricket balls have delivered an insurer's nightmare, with hundreds of cars destroyed or damaged at two sister dealerships in Sydney's west and northwest. The severe thunderstorm lashed Sydney's west on Sunday afternoon, destroying 170 new cars at Heartland Holden in Castle Hill and damaging all second-hand vehicles at its western dealership in Blacktown. The storm, which left 13,000 homes without electricity and damaged more than 1000 houses, was estimated to have caused up to \$60 million worth of damage. Heartland Holden general manager Wayne Morgan said the dealership had been significantly affected but was covered by insurance. "Every car that was not under cover has been damaged, with 170 cars destroyed by hailstones," he said. NSW State Emergency Services received 1400 calls and had attended to about a third by yesterday afternoon, a spokesman said. "We are still receiving calls now, and we are expecting more people to call ... after noticing leaks in their ceilings," he said. "The damage is split. There's a lot of hail damage in Blacktown and tree damage in Baulkham Hills and through western Sydney, some of which are quite serious." SES has called in 20 teams from other agencies to assist in repairing the damage caused by the storm on Sunday. According to a spokesman for the Bureau of Meteorology, the storm was one of the most severe. "It was what we call a super cell thunderstorm; it's one of the severest that you can get," he said. "The storm caused giant hailstones between 4 and 7cm (in circumference)." Paul Giles from the Insurance Council of Australia said the amount of damage was still being assessed but the number of claims was in the thousands. He said the total amount of damage caused could not yet be determined; despite reports it could be as high as \$60 million. "We are not in a position

to estimate numbers as we don't know the size of the damage and the cost to repair it - claims are still being assessed," he said.

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"Calls are still coming through. The industry gears up for this sort of thing and it's done as quickly as possible." Mother of two Karen Pike, from the western Sydney suburb of Glen haven, waited two hours to get through to her insurance company after a tree fell on to her roof on Sunday. "Nobody was in the house at the time apart from the dog, and he's still looking like he needs Valium," she said. "As we were walking up to the house, I was just amazed at the sight of people helping others. My 11-year-old son was trying to clean up leaves and said to me 'this is for you, Mum'. "The SES have been amazing. It shows you how willing others are to help; they are all volunteers."

Garrett trades gag for foot-in-mouth jokes

He might well be Environment Minister, but Peter Garrett has no place speaking on climate change - and that's straight from the horse's mouth. Garrett's big voice, as famous for years of rock'n'roll-fuelled environmental campaigning as it is for his more recent electoral campaign missteps, appears to have finally and officially been gagged. With six ministers descending on the UN climate change conference in Bali this week and world pressure mounting on Kevin Rudd to take a stand for domestic greenhouse gas emission cuts, sources close to the Australian delegation revealed a decision had been made not to allow more than one minister loose at any time. The danger of one of them accidentally making Australia's bargaining position clear was thought to be too great. However, Garrett proved to be singing from the same hymn sheet as his boss yesterday when he got his first allotted moment as an Australian minister abroad. The famous chiselled jaw was set firm as he strode to a meeting with US senator John Kerry. Mr Garrett admitted the pair were not planning to directly discuss the topic most on the minds of the 10,000-odd participants in the Bali summit. They would, however, "be talking about a number of related and important matters; I'm looking forward to this discussion very much", he said. Kerry, a failed Democrat presidential candidate, is not in Bali as a member of his Government's official delegation to the UN convention, but he will take away significant political capital. After jetting in for the 36-hour visit, he flew out again last night to debate a key energy bill on the floor of the US Senate - armed, he hoped, with the views and support of those he met during his short stopover. Garrett, on the other hand, must be the only environment minister at the gathering - and there are many - who really has nothing to say on the topic. He was leaving that to the Climate Change Minister, Penny Wong, due to arrive in Bali late last night, and to the Prime Minister, who yesterday again refused to commit Australia to the 25 to 40 per cent reduction in domestic greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 that has been agreed as a baseline for a post-2012 climate change agreement. Nor, Garrett revealed, would he be participating in any of the detailed negotiations over a post-Kyoto treaty in Bali; his presence at the convention, he said, was about sharing "some of Australia's actually solid and strong and good achievements on this matter - I can tell you it's a terrific place to be". After meeting Kerry, Garrett spoke at the launch of an orangutan protection program attended by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono; the Environment Minister and former rock star was later embraced warmly by Terri Irwin, wife of the late environmental showman Steve Irwin.

Wong plans river talks with states

New Climate Change and Water Minister Penny Wong will begin negotiations with her state counterparts after returning from the Bali climate conference to reach an agreement on managing the Murray-Darling Basin. The commitment came as authorities warned that water levels in the basin were at their lowest levels in six decades. On the eve of her departure for Bali, Senator Wong would not be drawn on whether she agreed with water experts that the Howard government's \$10 billion proposal for commonwealth control of the Murray-Darling was doomed unless the states gave up powers over water licences. However, she said reaching a national agreement to manage the rivers would be a priority for the Rudd Government. The Victorian and Queensland governments signalled yesterday that they would co-operate with a new initiative from Canberra. "It is important to the Government that we progress (Murray-Darling reform) as a priority issue," Senator Wong said. "The Government is committed to working co-operatively with the states and territories to achieve this significant reform." Senator Wong said she would be communicating with her state colleagues as soon as possible. Victorian Water Minister Tim Holding said he looked forward to working with Ms Wong and the other states on a practical solution to managing the Murray-Darling. "Victoria supports a national approach to managing the rivers and we will try to work with the commonwealth," Mr Holding said. Victoria had refused to sign up to the Howard government's \$10 billion Murray-Darling plan, claiming that its irrigators would be disadvantaged. Former water minister Malcolm Turnbull declared before the election that it did not matter if the states retained control of water licences because the commonwealth had the authority to enforce caps on water use. However, Wentworth Group of Scientists member Peter Cullen said it was difficult to see how a commonwealth takeover of the rivers could work without the states' agreement. "I would think it will be very messy unless the states come on board," Professor Cullen said. He said Canberra would have to rely on the commonwealth's external

powers under the Ramsar wetlands convention to restrict the states' control of licences. University of NSW ecologist Richard Kingsford said Ramsar powers were a "toothless tiger".

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Professor Kingsford said the Murray-Darling Basin Commission set caps on water use now, but the states could ignore them. Figures released yesterday by the commission showed storage levels in the basin were at their lowest levels since 1940. Total storage was 1885 gigalitres at the end of November - down from 2435GL at this time last year. Commission chief executive Wendy Craik said less than 1 per cent of divertible water was available for critical environmental watering. Dr Craik said the drought increased the threat of algal blooms, high salinity and increased acid sulphate leakage. Bureau of Meteorology climate centre head Michael Coughlan said the La Nina event was now well established, with a 60 to 70 per cent chance of higher than average rainfall this summer.

Adelaidenow.com - Hot rocks may power desal plant at Port Adelaide

Hot subterranean rocks could be used to power a desalination plant at Port Adelaide, geothermal energy company Torrens Energy says. The State Government has granted Torrens a geothermal exploration licence at Port Adelaide, covering the Pelican Point and Torrens Island areas, home to four power plants supplying 56 per cent of the State's electricity. Torrens chief executive Chris Matthews said if the company found underground heat levels of more than 200 degrees as it expected to, the energy could be used either to power a desalination plant, or make the existing power stations more efficient. "Studies completed overseas have shown that relatively moderate geothermal temperatures can be utilised to effectively desalinate seawater," Mr Matthews said. "Torrens Energy is also aware of other research projects in Australia that aim to develop direct geothermal desalination." Mr Matthews said geothermal energy could also be used to pre-heat water used by the conventional power stations, therefore decreasing the amount of energy they used to generate electricity. Mr Matthews said the company had commissioned independent research, which had estimated temperatures could be more than 200 degrees at a depth of 5km. Drilling to confirm the modelling was expected to start within 12-18 months. Minister for Mineral Resources Development Paul Holloway said any activities in the area would be subject to detailed risk management studies and public consultation. "Any future development arising from successful drilling will be required to be in sympathy with both the natural and man-made environment," Mr Holloway said. "The company has advised it has no intention of drilling within the Torrens Island Conservation Park or the swamp lands or offshore areas of the dolphin sanctuary." "It has also given assurances that the land drilling process will have no impact on the waterways that are home to Port Adelaide's dolphins." "Now that the company has secured exploration rights, it will need to seek further approvals subject to rigorous environmental requirements and detailed risk-management studies before commencing drilling processes within specific areas."

Adelaide Advertiser - Adelaide the most car-dominated city in in Australia

Adelaide has been named Australia's most car-dominated city, with more people driving to work per head of population than any other Australian capital. A university of Melbourne study revealed that 320,735 South Australians (or 75.4 per cent) drove to work each day while another 28,375 people (6.7 per cent) travelled as a passenger. Perth followed closely behind with 75 per cent of people driving to work, followed by Melbourne with 73 per cent and Canberra with 72.3 per cent. Sydney had the lowest percentage with only 63.4 per cent of people driving to work. The study, which looked at how people travelled to work from 1976 to 2006, also found that only nine per cent of people in Adelaide used public transport. The report listed Government's failure to spend enough money on public transport as the reason for the increase in drivers. "Adelaide remains dominated by road construction, with public transport and walking very much an afterthought," it says. "Adelaide is now the only capital city with a suburban rail system that has not been electrified. "As a result car driving has increased faster than in any other city ... and is now the highest in the nation."

We stall on green pledge

Australia has joined China and the U.S. in refusing to commit to emissions targets at the United Nations climate change conference in Bali. The world's top two polluters yesterday said they were not ready to commit to mandatory caps on greenhouse gases. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said Australia, which has the highest per capita greenhouse gas emission rate in the world, would wait for a report by economist Ross Garnaut, due to be complete by June, before making a commitment. He said Australia would not set emissions targets without careful consideration and the timing of the Garnaut report would fit the timetable expected to be drawn up in Bali this week. Conference organisers said they were not worried that the world's major polluters would fail to make an immediate commitment, as the aim of the conference was to launch negotiations on new targets. Officials from 192 countries are in their second week of discussions on a new deal, which will replace the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto pact, which called for an average reduction in emissions of 5 per cent below 1990 levels, will expire in 2012. It did not set targets for developing countries, including the world's top polluter, China. A draft proposal from this week's conference has set targets to reduce emissions by 25 to 40 per cent below 1990 levels for developed countries by 2020. It allows for global emissions to peak in the next 10 to 15 years, but

these must be cut by half of 2000 levels by 2050. It does not outline specific cuts to be achieved by individual countries.

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The two-week Bali talks, which finish on Friday, are aimed at developing a "road map" for negotiations to come up with a new global climate change agreement over the next two years. U.N. Climate Change Secretariat executive secretary Yvo de Boer said the conference was being held to set the wheels in motion, and a new deal to replace the Kyoto Protocol would not be signed during the 14-day event. "Reaching a conclusion, even in two years, is going to be very ambitious, let alone trying to achieve that kind of result in two weeks," he said. Mr de Boer said it seemed likely there would not be binding emissions reduction commitments imposed on developing countries, such as China and India. Officials attending the conference are discussing the key areas which the new agreement should cover, such as technology and financing, and when negotiations should finish so that the new deal can be ratified. Mr Rudd, who joins Environment Minister Peter Garrett and Climate Change Minister Penny Wong at the conference today, denied the UN meeting would be a failure if no agreement was reached on emission targets. He said Australia was a leader on climate change, despite the Government's not setting any targets. "I would not have taken the decision to proceed with the ratification of Kyoto unless as Prime Minister of Australia I was determined to show leadership in this area," he said. The U.S. has also pledged to have its own plan to cut global-warming gases by mid-2008 and will not commit to mandatory caps during the conference.

The Australian - Rudd resisting Bali targets

Australia, the US, Japan and Canada are resisting pressure from the UN and developing countries to adopt dramatic targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions as a major split emerges at the Bali conference on climate change. As business and industry warn of catastrophic economic effects if the ambitious claims of 25-40 per cent emission cuts by 2020 are adopted at the conference, Kevin Rudd and his Climate Change Minister Penny Wong have declared Australia will not budge until it knows the full cost of adopting any targets. The Prime Minister yesterday offered broad support to the targets and their inclusion in a draft document being negotiated at the conference. But he insisted Australia would not set its own binding short-term goal until the climate change review it has commissioned from economist Ross Garnaut is completed in the middle of next year. "We will then be in a position to frame our own targets," the Prime Minister said after a meeting last night with Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. "Our own long-term target is an ambitious one of a 60 per cent reduction in emissions by 2050." Senator Wong said Australia recognised "the need for developed nations to take the lead" in tackling climate change. "We agree with our friends in the EU and in other nations who say that we need an interim target - Australia agrees with that," she said. "But what we have done is we have put in place a process to determine what that target will be and, importantly, how we propose to meet that." The Bali conference was called by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to draw a road map for a new post-Kyoto pact on climate change. Despite refusing to commit to medium-term targets, Senator Wong said global negotiations for a new post-2012 global deal needed to be guided by the emissions-reduction targets estimated by the IPCC. But the US, Canada, Japan and some developing countries remain opposed to including mention of the interim 2020 targets in a draft document being negotiated at the conference. The controversial paragraph would also identify the need for global cuts beyond 50 per cent by 2050. Former US vice-president turned climate campaigner Al Gore, who last week welcomed the Rudd Government's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, used his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize in Norway last night to declare that the US and China would "stand accountable before history" if they failed to take urgent action to combat climate change. Mr Rudd will formally hand over documents ratifying the Kyoto Protocol to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the start of the high-level ministerial meeting this morning. He had dinner last night with Dr Yudhoyono within hours of his arrival in Bali on his first prime ministerial overseas visit. After praising his predecessor John Howard's engagement with Indonesia, Mr Rudd said he wanted to expand it during his period in government. He said the relationship was "broad and deep" and that he had discussed with Dr Yudhoyono greater co-operation on security, climate change, trade and development. Dr Yudhoyono said the two countries should work together at a regional and global level to deal with the challenges facing them, including climate change and "deforestation and reforestation and forest protection in Indonesia". He described the half-hour talks - during which Mr Rudd indicated he would plead for the lives of the Bali Nine drug smugglers facing execution in Indonesia - as "a very constructive and productive dialogue". The Indonesian President gave his backing to the projected range for 2020 emissions cuts but suggested it was one to which both developed and developing countries should contribute. "We're aware of its importance in reducing global temperatures," he said. "This can be reached through a partnership of developed and developing countries through a clear framework on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities." Australia is challenging developing countries to embrace market-based and free trade approaches to tackling climate change, arguing it is the only way they can guarantee continuing economic growth. The Australian Industry Group yesterday warned that any rush by Australia to adopt an emissions target of 25 per cent or more by 2020 could severely harm economic competitiveness.

AI Group chief executive Heather Ridout said a commitment without binding agreements from the world's biggest emitters, including the US, China, India and Brazil, would undermine any Australian contribution.

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She warned that given Australia's Kyoto commitment was 108 per cent emissions on 1990 levels, the draft Bali proposal of a 25 to 40 per cent cut would in effect mean a reduction of between 30 and 45 per cent in the eight years to 2020. "Cuts of this magnitude would impose extraordinary adjustment costs on Australian households and businesses," she said. "By adopting unrealistic targets, there is a real risk that we would impose these extraordinary costs on ourselves, generate no environmental benefits and undermine the consensus to take domestic action to reduce emissions." The International Energy Agency said the world would need to spend \$US22 trillion by 2030 if it was to meet the targets. This represented the global construction of 30 nuclear power stations, 22 clean coal power stations, 20 gas power stations with capture and storage, two hydro systems the same size as China's Three Gorges Dam and 17,000 wind turbines each year between 2013 and 2030. The US has completely opposed the inclusion of any targets in the Bali negotiations. Chief US negotiator Harlan Watson yesterday said the 25-40 per cent range was based on "many uncertainties" and on a small number of studies examined by the IPCC. Australian negotiators are now working on a compromise to unite the 189 nations in Bali but have blocked an attempt by the European Union and Norway to include a specific reference in the draft document to limiting temperature increases to 2C. The UN and environmentalists have been backing the aggressive position adopted by the EU on the inclusion of medium-term targets in the negotiating road map. UN Framework Convention for Climate Change chief Yvo de Boer yesterday tried to play down the significance of the reference targets in the hope of getting the support of ministers when they meet today. "The 25 to 40 per cent is an emissions reduction range, not a target, and it's something that governments earlier this year said they should be guided by in the context of these negotiations," he said. "This conference will not produce an agreement on concrete emissions reduction targets. It's not supposed to do that. It's supposed to set the wheels in motion." Australia's hardline stance has been criticised by environmental groups including Greenpeace, which argues Canberra must sign up to the 25-40 per cent target for greenhouse emission cuts. Greenpeace's Ben Pearson said his group was prepared to give Senator Wong the benefit of the doubt. "Hopefully what she will see is that there is overwhelming support for the 25 to 40 per cent range of targets for industrialised countries," he said. "Minister Wong cannot hide behind the Garnaut review as a reason for not making a decision here." The Australian Conservation Foundation's Don Henry said he was worried about what the delegation was doing and hoped the minister would now intervene.

Laureate Gore puts heat on US, China

Oslo: Al Gore received his Nobel Peace Prize yesterday, declaring that the world's biggest polluters, the US and China, would "stand accountable before history" if they failed to act to combat climate change. "It is time to make peace with the planet," Mr. Gore said in the Norwegian capital. "We must mobilise our civilisation with the urgency and resolve that has previously been seen only when nations mobilised for war. "It should be absolutely clear that it is the two largest CO2 emitters (the US and China) and most of all my own country that will need to make the boldest moves. Both countries should stop using the other's behaviour as an excuse for stalemate and instead develop an agenda for mutual survival." The remarks came as governments met in Bali to work on a new international treaty on carbon emissions to replace Kyoto by 2012. Mr. Gore, the former US vice-president who lost the 2000 presidential race by a wafer-thin margin, called on humanity to mobilise at once against the dangers of the changing climate. "Without realising it, we have begun to wage war on the earth," he said. "Now, we and the climate are locked in a relationship familiar to war planners: 'mutually assured destruction'. It is time to make peace with the planet." Mr Gore was awarded the prize for sounding the alarm over global warming. His co-winner, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, was represented by its leader, Rajendra Pachauri. Mr Gore urged the Bali conference to quickly draft a treaty to limit emissions of the gases that cause climate change, as a follow-up to the 1997 Kyoto accord. He called on world leaders to put a new climate treaty in place by 2010, two years earlier than planned. Heads of state should meet every three months to negotiate the treaty, because global warming must be slowed. Mr Gore said the world's biggest polluters, the US and China, must stop blaming each other for the stalemate over warming. Instead, they must take the lead in solving a problem for which they bear a large responsibility, he said, or be held "accountable before history for their failure to act". He drew a parallel between leaders ignoring the climate crisis and those whom Churchill, the wartime British prime minister, lambasted for inaction as Adolf Hitler built up Nazi Germany before World War II. *The Times, AP*

Emissions trading best tool: Swan

A market-based emissions trading system involving "all" nations was the best tool for managing greenhouse gas pollution without damaging economic growth, Wayne Swan says. Mr Swan told the United Nation's climate conference in Bali this afternoon that Australia recognised that different economies had different capacities in containing carbon emissions. Australia would meet its international responsibilities through financial aid to

developing countries in their fight with the causes and effects of climate change, such as \$150 million for the South Pacific.

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"Countries committed to tackling the climate change challenge will find, in Australia, a partner ready to embrace its responsibilities," he said. But he said the governments of developed countries have an important role in facilitating the economic transformations developing nations needed to reduce their emissions over the longer term. Mr Swan said the key to the global solution would be finding the means by which all countries contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in ways "that are compatible with their legitimate aspirations for growth". "Ways that recognise their different levels of economic development," he said. "As finance ministers we understand the important role that market-based mechanisms must play if reducing greenhouse gas emissions is to be achieved at least cost to our economies." "The price signals provided by such mechanisms are critical in promoting the development and deployment of low emission technologies." Mr Swan said that Australia believed that in with "a fair and effective global agreement on controlling emissions", there were considerable advantages for all countries in moving towards pricing carbon through market-based mechanisms such as emissions trading. "For example, by establishing and linking emissions trading schemes, developed countries can purchase low cost abatement opportunities in developing countries," he said. "Equally, developing countries, in selling their abatement, access an important source of capital flows. These flows can assist in promoting strong economic growth and investment in a low emission future." With Australia now ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, it could join with other countries in providing finance through the Clean Development Mechanism – the existing carbon credits trading scheme, he said. Mr Swan's comments follow those of his colleague Trade Minister Simon Crean earlier at the United Nations' conference where he argued increasing free trade would help promote the use of clean technology. Mr Crean argued at the conference on the weekend world trade talks to be used as a vehicle for spreading low emissions technology and to help create a workable world carbon trading market. Freer international trade could create both cost-effective and science-based solutions that could also reflect the particular needs of some nations. The European Union and the United States have proposed removing tariffs and other trade barriers on low- and zero-emission technology. The emphasis on free trade as part of the climate change solution is critical part of the Rudd Government's reshaping of Australia's trade policy away from encouraging bi-lateral deals towards a higher priority for multi-lateral negotiations. Australia believes that action on greenhouse emissions should not be used as a tool for old-fashioned trade protection either deliberately or accidentally through poor design of measures. At the weekend Mr Crean said all trade ministers should be concerned about "systemic threats" to the international trading system in the name of the environment such as unilateral tariffs or tax imposts. "The system has been built over many decades of negotiations and has served the world well, especially over the past decade which has recorded historically high levels of global economic development and rapid declines in poverty levels, particularly here in our immediate region," he said. "We now need to see international negotiations succeed in building a more robust regime for avoiding dangerous climate change. "

Little future for coal power: Garnaut

Coal-fired power has no future in Australia unless ways are found to reduce its carbon emissions, while nuclear energy will be too expensive, according to the man drawing up a climate change strategy for the Rudd Government and the states. On the eve of departing for the Bali conference, economist Ross Garnaut said it could be three years before Australia knew what post-Kyoto emission targets it would have to meet beyond 2012. Professor Garnaut also indicated his belief that China and India should agree to mandatory emission-reduction targets. He said the future of coal-fired power in Australia depended on the success of carbon sequestration - the extraction and storage of carbon monoxide. "If we can make it work at a reasonable cost then coal has an expanding future," he told a media conference in Brisbane. "To produce the same amount of electricity, you are going to have to produce more coal because there is energy used in the sequestration process." However, if economic ways of reducing emissions were not found, "there will come a time where there won't be new coal-fired power stations". Professor Garnaut said the nuclear option had to take into account the considerable costs associated with community concern. "They are real costs that would affect the viability of the industry in Australia," he said. "In Australia I doubt, when all the work has been done, that nuclear would be commercially viable." Although a draft road map circulating in Bali urges developed nations to reduce emissions by between 25 and 40 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020, Professor Garnaut said it could be 2010 before Australia knew its post-Kyoto targets. "The Bali meeting will be developing a framework for what happens after 2012," he said. "The understanding is that a couple of years in advance is the right timetable. Between now and the end of next year, the international community will be working towards the post-2012 arrangements. I don't think we need firm numbers now." Professor Garnaut indicated his belief that China and India should agree to mandatory targets for emission reductions, which they have rejected to date, along with other developing

nations. "If the world problem is going to be solved then all the major countries, including China and India, are going to have to break the nexus between economic growth and emissions," he said.

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"China and India rely heavily on coal, much of it from Australia. It's very much in our interests for China and India to find ways of keeping up their economic growth but making that consistent with lower emission levels." Professor Garnaut warned that Australians would pay a price for meeting the challenges of climate change, but he said the cost of doing nothing would be higher. Electricity bills and the cost of water in cities would rise. The cost of permits under a carbon trading system would be passed to consumers. The biggest cost would be the development of alternative energy sources such as wind, geothermal and solar.

Wong stares down critics in Bali

Climate Change Minister Penny Wong has played a strong opening hand at her first public appearance at the United Nations Climate change Conference in Bali. Senator Wong refused to commit Australia to binding greenhouse gas emissions cuts but described Australia's anticipated role at the talks as: "Positive and constructive." The statement showed Senator Wong and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd are determined to play a hard line in negotiations over establishing a post-2012 climate change regime. The new senator's cool-as-a-cucumber performance under a blazing Bali sun bodes well for the tough bargaining that is to come over the next three days. Fierce argument is expected to focus on whether a range of emissions cuts is acceptable to both developed and developing countries. A key point of disagreement has been the issue of committing to a greenhouse gas emissions reduction figure of between 25 and 40 per cent by 2020 over 1990 levels. Negotiations indicated today that the 25 to 40 per cent target would remain in the draft text of a document to be considered by ministers tomorrow indicating both that there had been no agreement reached but also that nothing was ruled out.

Mr Rudd arrived in Denpasar on his RAAF 737 accompanied by Foreign Minister Steven Smith this afternoon. They were welcomed by Australian Ambassador Bill Farmer and Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda. Mr Rudd did not stop and was scheduled to go directly to a meeting with Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Mr Rudd will address the UN conference tomorrow. Earlier, UN climate chief Yvo de Boer called on the 180 finance ministers in Bali today, including Australian Treasurer Wayne Swan, to use monetary muscle to tackle global warming. "Designing a long-term solution to climate change is mainly a challenge of intelligent financial engineering," said de Boer, who is head of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which is organising the December 3-14 Bali talks. "It is the environment ministers who set the goals in this process, but it's the finance and economics ministers who have to get us to those goals," he told AFP before addressing the finance chiefs. "I think that there's an opportunity here for finance ministers, by coming to grips with this issue, to turn it into an opportunity for clean economic growth rather than a threat," he said. The two-day talks among financial representatives from 37 countries began on Monday, preceded by a weekend meeting of trade ministers. It is the first time that ministers from the trade and finance arenas have attended the annual UNFCCC meeting, a development that reflects how climate change has amplified from being a purely environmental issue. Environment ministers meet in Bali for three days from Wednesday to climax the overall UNFCCC talks, which aim to set a "roadmap" for action beyond 2012, when the current pledges of the Kyoto Protocol run out. According to the UN's Nobel-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global average surface temperatures could rise by between 1.1 C and 6.4 C (1.98 and 11.52 F) by 2100 compared to 1980-99 levels. Drought, floods, storms and rising sea levels are among the amplifying risks that the world faces. To limit the overall rise in warming since pre-industrial times to 2.0-2.8 C (3.6-5.0 F) will cost less than 0.12 percent of annual world GDP growth by 2030, says the IPCC. Among the tools open to policymakers are tougher energy-efficiency standards, taxes on fossil fuels that are the big drivers of global warming and cap-and-trade systems on greenhouse-gas emissions as well as measures to encourage clean technology. Such measures run into resistance given their potential financial cost and their challenge to established interests. - *with AFP*

UK plans to ramp up wind-power

Britain unveiled plans today to generate enough electricity through offshore wind farms to power every home in the country by 2020, increasing production more than 60-fold and changing the look of the country's coasts. Britain's business secretary John Hutton today said the government planned to reach the target through a fourfold increase in the amount of space off Britain's coast allocated for wind farms. The move would change Britain's coasts, Hutton acknowledged, but said the need for energy self-sufficiency left the country no choice. He said the plans would depend on environmental impact studies. "But if we could manage to achieve this, by 2020 enough electricity could be generated off our shores to power the equivalent of all of the UK's homes," Hutton said in a statement. The British Wind Energy Association, a trade body which represents the country's wind and marine energy industries, welcomed plans for more offshore wind farm sites, but it said it would be difficult to raise Britain's wind power production to 33 gigawatts by 2020 from half a gigawatt currently. Eight gigawatts'

worth of wind generation projects are already planned, but the group said the limited supply of turbines meant the amount of wind energy produced by 2020 would likely be closer to 20 gigawatts. "We'd really be struggling from a 'Where can we get the turbines?'" point of view, the association's economics director Gordon Edge said.

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Environmental campaigners and opposition MPs welcomed the plan, but some noted that wind generated power is expensive. Wind power-generated electricity is currently more expensive to generate than its coal- or gas-generated counterpart. Although Britain's wind-swept coasts and shallow waters are ideal for offshore turbines, wind generated power accounts for less than two per cent of its energy generation.

However, massive new offshore wind farms, such as the one gigawatt London project planned for the Thames estuary in the country's south-east, are due to go online by 2014. According to the BWEA, the country is on track to overtake Denmark as the world's largest generator of offshore wind power next year. - AP

Wong plans river talks with states

New Climate Change and Water Minister Penny Wong will begin negotiations with her state counterparts after returning from the Bali climate conference to reach an agreement on managing the Murray-Darling Basin. The commitment came as authorities warned that water levels in the basin were at their lowest levels in six decades. On the eve of her departure for Bali, Senator Wong would not be drawn on whether she agreed with water experts that the Howard government's \$10 billion proposal for commonwealth control of the Murray-Darling was doomed unless the states gave up powers over water licences. However, she said reaching a national agreement to manage the rivers would be a priority for the Rudd Government. The Victorian and Queensland governments signalled yesterday that they would co-operate with a new initiative from Canberra. "It is important to the Government that we progress (Murray-Darling reform) as a priority issue," Senator Wong said. "The Government is committed to working co-operatively with the states and territories to achieve this significant reform." Senator Wong said she would be communicating with her state colleagues as soon as possible.

Victorian Water Minister Tim Holding said he looked forward to working with Ms Wong and the other states on a practical solution to managing the Murray-Darling. "Victoria supports a national approach to managing the rivers and we will try to work with the commonwealth," Mr Holding said. Victoria had refused to sign up to the Howard government's \$10 billion Murray-Darling plan, claiming that its irrigators would be disadvantaged. Former water minister Malcolm Turnbull declared before the election that it did not matter if the states retained control of water licences because the commonwealth had the authority to enforce caps on water use. However, Wentworth Group of Scientists member Peter Cullen said it was difficult to see how a commonwealth takeover of the rivers could work without the states' agreement. "I would think it will be very messy unless the states come on board," Professor Cullen said. He said Canberra would have to rely on the commonwealth's external powers under the Ramsar wetlands convention to restrict the states' control of licences. University of NSW ecologist Richard Kingsford said Ramsar powers were a "toothless tiger". Professor Kingsford said the Murray-Darling Basin Commission set caps on water use now, but the states could ignore them. Figures released yesterday by the commission showed storage levels in the basin were at their lowest levels since 1940. Total storage was 1885 gegalitres at the end of November - down from 2435GL at this time last year. Commission chief executive Wendy Craik said less than 1 per cent of divertible water was available for critical environmental watering. Dr Craik said the drought increased the threat of algal blooms, high salinity and increased acid sulphate leakage. Bureau of Meteorology climate centre head Michael Coughlan said the La Nina event was now well established, with a 60 to 70 per cent chance of higher than average rainfall this summer.

PM's presence at summit places outcomes at risk, says Turnbull

Kevin Rudd has risked locking Australia into a weak negotiating position by travelling to the Bali climate change conference, according to Opposition Treasury spokesman Malcolm Turnbull. Mr Turnbull said it was a long-established principle of negotiation to keep the decision-maker away from the negotiating table. "I am not aware of any other head of government that is attending," he said. "All the other nations are being represented by their environment minister. Every country will be under pressure to make concessions beyond what they had planned to make. "But the other countries' environment ministers will be able to point to their negotiating parameters and say, quite truthfully, that they cannot go beyond them at this conference. "Mr Rudd, on the other hand, is not just our head of government, he is accompanied by nearly a third of the cabinet. "He runs the risk of being carried away with the enthusiasm of making commitments, in whatever form, which will be contrary to our interests." Mr Turnbull said Mr Rudd was travelling to Bali only because the Coalition had focused during the election campaign on the capability of then Labor environment spokesman Peter Garrett - now Environment Minister - to represent Australia's interests. Mr Turnbull said the subsequent decision by former prime minister John Howard to say that he, too, would attend the Bali conference was "me-tooism" on Mr Howard's behalf. Mr Turnbull said the Bali conference was of the utmost importance for the future of the climate change debate. "It is precisely because of the importance of Bali that Mr Rudd's attendance poses risks to Australia - although it

will offer him a splendid photo opportunity." Mr Turnbull, who was environment minister until the election, said the danger was that Mr Rudd would agree to an outcome at Bali that was not a complete package involving all developing countries.

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He said the Europeans and Chinese would see Mr Rudd as a soft touch because he had, until he overruled Mr Garrett during the election campaign, accepted the proposition that developing countries should have special treatment in reducing emissions. "The view that Peter Garrett always took was that it was unreasonable to expect the major emitters of the developing world to make cuts," Mr Turnbull said. "For a country like Australia, unilateral cuts in emissions are the economic equivalent of unilateral disarmament, if they apply to trade-exposed sectors."

Gore praises Rudd in Nobel speech

Former US vice-president Al Gore has praised Kevin Rudd's decision to sign the Kyoto Protocol while accepting his Nobel Peace Prize. New Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's first act after taking his oath of office on December 3 was to sign the instrument of ratification for Kyoto, the international agreement which commits countries to targets for reducing or capping their greenhouse gas emissions. Mr Rudd said his decision to ratify Kyoto so soon after being formally inducted as prime minister showed how serious he was about tackling climate change. The US is the only rich nation not party to the Kyoto Protocol, while China has said it will not back binding emissions curbs that could affect its booming economy. Mr Gore praised Australia and several other countries as he urged the US and China to join the fight against global warming. "I salute Europe and Japan for the steps they've taken in recent years to meet the challenge, and the new government in Australia, which has made solving the climate crisis its first priority," he said. "But the outcome will be decisively influenced by two nations that are now failing to do enough: the United States and China. "While India is also growing fast in importance, it should be absolutely clear that it is the two largest CO2 emitters most of all, my own country, that will need to make the boldest moves, or stand accountable before history for their failure to act. "Both countries should stop using the other's behaviour as an excuse for stalemate and instead develop an agenda for mutual survival in a shared global environment," Gore said at a lavish ceremony in the Oslo city hall. Mr Rudd flies to Bali today for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, where delegates from nearly 190 nations are hammering out the groundwork for a new global warming treaty beyond 2012 when the Kyoto Protocol's first phase expires. Mr Gore voiced optimism on the prospects of the ongoing Bali summit. "It's unfortunate that my country, which I believe should be the leader of the world, is now blocking action in Bali," Mr Gore said. Mr Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - a United Nations body of about 3,000 experts - each received a Nobel diploma, a gold medal and \$US1.5 million (\$1.7 million) to be split between them for their work to raise awareness about the effects of global warming. Murray-Darling off agenda THE stand-off over the Murray-Darling river system has been left off the agenda for next week's first Council of Australian Governments meeting between Kevin Rudd and the states. The move has angered local governments along the Murray River, who believe the issue should take precedence over the so-called education revolution and health funding. But hopes are rising over the prospect of a deal on the \$10billion plan to save the nation's major watercourse, with Victoria's farmers, whose stance is crucial to the state Government's agreement, praising the Rudd Government and predicting the differences will be resolved. Victorian government sources said agreement was almost reached earlier this year before former prime minister John Howard vetoed it to start another fight with the states. Victorian Farmers Federation president Simon Ramsay agreed. "Unfortunately, the commonwealth took an all-or-nothing approach. I don't believe the Rudd Government is of that ilk," he said. "I am quite sure there will be agreement made, whether it's January or February, but it won't be at the expense of Victorian irrigators." Despite the significance of the plan, it was left off COAG's agenda in deference to the non-Murray-Darling states. But it is believed both Victoria and the commonwealth are keen to hold talks early in the new year. New federal Water Minister Penny Wong will have to overcome growing resistance among irrigators in South Australia and NSW, states which signed up quickly to Mr Howard's proposed in-principle deal. NSW originally agreed to free itself of wrangles over dwindling water rights and get a large cash injection, while South Australia is desperate for the extra water. Victorian Water Minister Tim Holding said: "Victoria expects a new national approach to managing the Murray-Darling Basin under the Rudd Government and looks forward to working with Ms Wong and the other states on a practical solution." The main sticking point between Victoria and the commonwealth remains the state's reluctance to hand over the power to set irrigation entitlements in individual rivers and catchments. Victoria is happy for the commonwealth to set and enforce overall environmental and agricultural water use in the basin, but wants to retain control over specific allocations within the state and also manage land use and farm dams. Differences also exist between the Howard position - supported by Mr Rudd - and Victoria on the role of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission in

monitoring the water market. Ray Najar, general manager of the Murray Darling Association, said the river system needed to be near the top of the COAG agenda, blaming the lack of rural Labor voters for its omission.

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FarmOnLine

Bali '07: Farmers being duded on greenhouse rules

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With the Australian Government ratifying the Kyoto Protocol and discussions now underway on a new international climate agreement in Bali, Australian farmers want the issues of climate change adaptation and mitigation brought to the fore. "Our farmers have already made a huge, and often unrecognised, contribution to reducing Australia's net greenhouse emissions - primary industry emissions have plummeted 40 per cent over the past 15 years," National Farmers Federation (NFF) president, David Crombie, who is heading the NFF delegation in Bali this week, says. "In fact, that Australia is on track to meet its Kyoto commitments is overwhelmingly due to our farmers changing their land use practices. But the existing international greenhouse accounting rules ignore the carbon cycle of agricultural systems – that is, taking account of not only emissions, but also sequestration. "Unlike any other emitting sectors, farming sees a natural 'life cycle' at work. "For instance, while it is true agriculture is responsible for about 17pc of Australia's total carbon emissions, no account is taken of the carbon being sequestered in soil, crops and trees in this assessment. "Life Cycle Assessments must be undertaken to ensure we have rules that reflect a better-informed and more accurate understanding of the complete carbon profile across the vast array of Australian farming systems. "A farm, being a biological system, is not like a power station and must not be treated like one. "Indeed, people are less concerned about agriculture's emissions - given food and fibre is so vital - than other sector's looking to use international rules to simply trade-off their emissions, rather than making any genuine attempt at reducing them. "The last thing the world needs at this time of global food shortage is for food production to be traded-off as a perverse outcome of carbon policies – after all, people can't eat carbon credits! "The new international rules being thrashed out in Bali must fully recognise the potential for agriculture to make a significant contribution to reduce the global carbon footprint. Further, these rules have implications in the context of an Australian Emissions Trading Scheme (AETS). Agriculture will be significantly affected regardless of whether it is directly involved in an AETS or not."

Adelaide Advertiser - Bali climate conference drops emissions targets

Specific emission reduction targets have been dropped from the draft Bali climate change accord, which will lead to a new agreement on global warming. It comes as federal Treasurer Wayne Swan committed Australia to providing financial aid to developing countries to help them fight climate change. Delegates from 192 countries are meeting in Bali at the United Nations Climate Change Conference to launch two years of negotiations towards a new agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol. They include Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, who arrived today. He met Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono before attending tonight's conference dinner. The two leaders discussed national security, counter-terrorism measures and climate change during the half-hour meeting. "I proposed to the president that Australia and Indonesia work in partnership globally and regionally and bilaterally to advance a decisive and effective outcome on climate change over this period ahead – that is the next two critical years," Mr Rudd said. The latest draft of the accord has dropped a target to reduce emissions by between 25 and 40 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020. The initial draft proposal outlined the target for developed countries but delegates in the negotiations have revealed specific numbers have been left out of the latest draft. The accord will be finalised by the end of the summit on Friday. Environmentalists have urged countries such as Australia, the U.S. and China, who have been opposed to agreeing to a target during the conference, to reconsider their positions and ensure a target is written into this week's accord. Climate Change Minister Penny Wong said Australia recognised the need for an interim target but the Government still would not commit to a binding goal for 2020 until a review was completed next year. She said the Government accepted the science behind the proposed reduction targets. "But what we have done is we have put in place a process to determine what that target will be and importantly how we propose to meet that," she said. "We agree with our friends in the (European Union) and in other nations who say that we need an interim target, Australia agrees with that." Greenpeace campaigner Ben Pearson said Senator Wong had arrived in Bali only on Tuesday and needed more time to meet other delegates. "We are prepared to give her the benefit of the doubt . . . hopefully what she will see is that there is overwhelming support for the 25 to 40 per cent range of targets for industrialised countries," he said. He said supporting the inclusion of specific targets in the accord did not mean Australia had to commit. It could make its commitment after the review is handed down next year.

News.com.au - At last, PM Rudd ratifies Kyoto

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has formally handed the official document ratifying the Kyoto Protocol to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon. Mr. Rudd met Mr. Ban this morning before the UN climate change conference on the Indonesian island of Bali. The new prime minister kept Mr. Ban waiting, turning up six

minutes late for the meeting. But when he arrived, he was bearing the instrument of ratification for Kyoto, a document his predecessor John Howard refused to sign for almost a decade. "I would like to stand and formally hand to you the instrument of ratification on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia to the Kyoto Protocol of the United Nations Framework on Climate Change Convention," Mr. Rudd said. "This has been a decision of our Government, a decision taken on the first day that my Government was in office.

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"So it is with great honour that I present you with this instrument." The two men smiled and shook hands as Mr. Rudd handed over the document. Mr. Ban thanked him for the move. "I congratulate you on this ratifying of the protocol so soon after you were sworn in," Mr. Ban said. "It is very important." The media were then ushered from the room as Mr. Ban spoke of the significance of Australia's decision. Mr. Rudd and Mr. Ban, accompanied by UN officials and Foreign Minister Stephen Smith, then went into a private meeting before the official opening of the high-level segment. Conference head Yvo de Boer, Mr. Ban, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Mr. Rudd would all address the segment today.

What does Bali really mean?

Over the past eight days, world leaders and environmentalists from 180 nations - including Australia - have sat down together to work on forming a global plan to tackle climate change. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd arrived in Indonesia yesterday afternoon, in time for the pointy end of the meeting. The UN Climate Change Conference in Bali is 11 days of talks, which many would argue have come at the eleventh hour. Some say it's already too late. One thing is certain - the world must quickly agree on how best to set greenhouse gas emissions targets to limit global warming. And Bali is the stepping stone.

What exactly is happening in Bali? Government delegates, environment ministers, prime ministers, presidents, environmentalists and conservationists from 180 countries have gathered for the conference. They have until Friday to come up with a way of slashing greenhouse gas emissions in the future. While they won't come up with a conclusive plan this week, their aim is to draft a road map for the future, paving the way for ambitious emissions targets post 2012, when the Kyoto Protocol expires.

What is the Kyoto Protocol? Agreed to in December 1997, the objective of the Kyoto Protocol was to achieve "stabilisation" of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere in order to stave off climate change. To date, 174 countries have ratified the protocol - including Australia. The first thing Mr Rudd did after he was elected was ratify Kyoto - a hugely symbolic act on the world stage, but one which won't make a huge difference to Australia's emissions output over the next few years. Australia was on track - or at least close - to meeting the Kyoto targets anyway. But as well as being obsolete, Kyoto is deeply flawed. The US has so far refused to ratify the pact, and large developing countries including China, India and Brazil are not currently required to meet specific targets.

Why do we need a new global emissions pact? If the bulk of the science is to be believed, the world has to take drastic action to limit greenhouse gas emissions to limit - and hopefully one day stop - global warming. A review undertaken for the British Treasury warned that the economic impact of climate change could be worse than the combined cost of both world wars. A recent CSIRO report warned Australia would almost certainly be 1C warmer by 2030 and could heat up by 5C by the end of the century. The number of drought months would increase dramatically, as would the number of high and extreme fire danger days. In Sydney, temperatures could rise by an average 4.3C by 2070, and the number of sweltering days above 35C could rise from 3.5 days to 12 days by 2070. Rainfall could drop nearly 10 per cent by 2030.

Who is representing Australia in Bali? As well as Mr Rudd, who flew in yesterday, Foreign Minister Stephen Smith, Environment Minister Peter Garrett and Climate Change Minister Penny Wong are attending. Some have pointed out this is an enormous carbon footprint, and that perhaps the meeting could have been held via teleconference. However conference organisers are trying to do their bit for the environment, insisting on a relaxed dress code - no ties or jackets. This is designed to make the conference environment more relaxed - as well as save on airconditioning, thereby cutting emissions.

What can be achieved in Bali? According to the conference website, this week's meeting is threefold: to launch negotiations on a climate change deal for the post-2012 period, to set the agenda for these negotiations and to reach agreement on when these negotiations will have to be concluded. It is unlikely any definitive targets will be set. Certainly Australia's isn't yet ready. Mr Rudd will not commit to any short-term targets, saying he will wait for economist Ross Garnaut to finish his study into emissions trading and the impact of interim targets. He will report by June. He had previously committed to reducing emissions by 60 per cent by 2050, establishing a national emissions trading scheme by 2010 and setting a 20 per cent renewable energy use target by 2020.

What do emissions targets mean for consumers? Higher electricity and food prices. Items such as milk, cheese and processed meats will rise in price because it will be costlier to cool them. Fruit, vegetables, meat and bread will also become more expensive because farmers will be forced to meet higher fuel and fertiliser costs, which will be passed on to consumers.

The Australian - Rudd promises 'robust' climate targets

Kevin Rudd says Australia will set real and robust targets for cutting carbon emissions, but after it has completed an economic review. Mr Rudd told delegates at the United Nations climate change conference in Bali today that Australia stands ready to respond to the problem. Mr Rudd also linked dealing with climate change to the challenge of boosting economic development across the globe.

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Australia recognised the particular responsibility developing countries had to lifting the living standards of their people and stood ready to help in the form of technology transfer and financial assistance. "A failure to act on climate change will make a development goal even harder to achieve," he said. Mr Rudd received enthusiastic applause as he was introduced at the high-level segment of the Bali talks, after earlier formally handing over the instrument of ratification of the Kyoto Protocol to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon. "I have done this because I believe that climate change is now one of the greatest moral and economic challenges of our time," he said. Mr Rudd said there must be a global goal for addressing climate change because unilateral action was not enough. Developed countries must commit to binding targets but the role of the Bali conference was to set a timetable and process for doing that. "We expect all developed countries to embrace a further set of binding emissions target and we need this meeting in Bali to map out the process and timeline in which this will happen. "And we need developing countries to play their part with specific commitments to action." All developed nations, including those outside the UN's Kyoto's framework – a probable reference to the United States – must embrace comparable efforts, he said. "Unilateral action is not enough we must all share the burden," he said "The truth is that we, the community of nations are in this together. The truth is that this challenge of climate change transcends the old political and ideological divides." Mr Rudd said signing the instruments to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and handing over those documents to the United Nations, was important because climate change was one of the greatest moral and economic challenges of our age. Australia was ready to play their part as the nation realised that it was no longer a distant or theoretical threat. Mr Rudd said climate change was the defining challenge of our generation. There was no plan B, we could not "escape to another planet," he said. Mr Rudd said his government was just 10 days old, but was "a government prepared to take on the challenge, do the hard work now and deliver a sustainable future". Earlier, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono congratulated Mr Rudd for his "speedy ratification" of the Kyoto treaty, sparking applause. International Monetary Fund deputy managing director Takastoshi Kato also applauded Australia's new stance on climate change. At a conference in Sydney today, Mr Kato said Treasurer Wayne Swan, whom he met yesterday, "was very straight and very forceful in laying out Australia's stance in the area of climate change". "Australia's new stance was very much appreciated and welcome," he said. Mr Rudd told the conference that tackling climate change would not be easy, but was vital to the planet's future. "It will require tough choices, and some of these will come at a political price," he said. "But unless we act, the long-term costs will threaten the security and stability of us all." Mr Rudd told the conference Australia had already committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent on 2000 levels by 2050. He said the review by economist Ross Garnaut would drive Australia's decisions on short and medium term targets. "They will be real targets," he said. "They will be robust targets. "They will be cognisant of the science and they will set the Australian economy firmly on the path to achieving our commitment to a 60 per cent reduction in emissions by 2050." Negotiations are intensifying over a draft proposal at the UN conference which calls for developed nations to aim to reduce global emissions by 25 to 40 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020. Mr Rudd said the Bali conference "must agree to work towards a shared global emissions goal". "A goal that, on the best advice available, recognises the core reality that we must avoid dangerous climate change," he added. But the targets also needed to be backed by "sustained action", Mr Rudd said as he outlined Australia's plans to implement a comprehensive emissions trading scheme by 2010, and increase renewable energy to 20 per cent of national supply by 2020. "For Australians, climate change is no longer a distant threat," he said. "It is no longer a scientific theory, it's an emerging reality." Both developing and developed nations needed to work to fight climate change, he said. Australia would work to "build bridges between nations" as the world pursued a new global pact by the end of 2009, Mr Rudd said. "We expect all developed countries to embrace a further set of binding emissions targets - and we need this meeting at Bali to map out the process and timeline for this to happen," he said. "And we need developing countries at Bali to map out the process and timeline for this to happen." The future approach must address critical challenges such as deforestation, he said. Mr. Rudd said future generations would judge nations harshly if they failed. "But I am optimistic that with clarity of purpose, clear-sightedness, courage and commitment we can prevail," he said. Mr. Rudd also condemned the "obscene attacks" on UN offices in Algiers overnight, extending the thoughts and prayers of Australians to the victims. At least 26 people - including 11 United Nations employees - were killed in the double car bombing, claimed by al-Qaeda's Branch in the Islamic Maghreb. The toll is expected to rise.

Developed world 'bears carbon burden'

Developed countries have been warned they must do "significantly more" in cutting their greenhouse gas emissions. At the start the leaders session of the United Nation's conference on climate change in Bali, Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said that all countries needed to do things differently, and do something more. But he said the principle of "common but differentiated" responsibilities and capabilities had been accepted by the international community since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and this should be part of the solution.

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"Unfortunately, for so many years we have not given the concept enough flesh and bone," he said. Mr Yudhoyono said although the negotiations were long and difficult they broke down to a simple proposition: less emissions, more carbon sinks. In a pointed message to developed countries he said they needed to do "significantly more" to cut their own level of emissions. He said it was essential for the United States to be part of any post 2012 arrangement because "otherwise we will not be able to effectively address the climate change issue". For developing countries, a commitment to sustainable development was needed, he said. While trying to stop the effects of deforestation, all parties had to be involved, and that meant helping local forestry communities finding alternative ways to make a living. Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was greeted with warm and extended applause for his decision to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Mr Yudhoyono singled out Mr Rudd for praise for his "speedy ratification". "I say to you Mr Prime Minister: Welcome aboard," he said. United Nation's secretary general Ban Ki-moon said reaching a comprehensive agreement would not be easy but parties needed to use the Bali talks to promise that they would reach a comprehensive deal by the effective deadline of 2009. Reflecting the UN's approach on different strategies for rich and poor nations, the secretary-general said developed countries must "take the lead" in cutting emissions while developing countries needed to be given "incentives" to lower theirs. Mr Moon said the challenge facing the nations was an ethical one, and those countries with the least resources to deal with climate change needed the most help. "Those who have done the least to cause the problem are bearing the greatest impact," he said. Mr Yudhoyono said while the initiatives of Rio 15 years ago and Kyoto 10 years ago had failed to stop climate change the possibility for action was improving. Ending the conference without a consensus should be avoided at all costs, he said, because this was not the time to let momentum slip. "Let it be known for years to come that Bali was the mark where we turned history," he said.

Adelaide.now - Kevin Rudd vows real climate action at Bali conference

Kevin Rudd has told world leaders in Bali that Australia will commit to "real" and "robust" targets to slash greenhouse gases next year. The Prime Minister told the UN climate change conference that climate change was the defining challenge of this generation, and Australia stood ready to respond. He told delegates at the United Nations climate change conference in Bali today that Australia would commit to "real" and "robust" short- and medium- term targets to slash greenhouse gases, after the Garnaut review is finished next year. Mr Rudd was applauded as he was introduced at the high-level segment of the Bali talks, after earlier formally handing over the instrument of ratification of the Kyoto Protocol to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon. "I have done this because I believe that climate change is now one of the greatest moral and economic challenges of our time," he said. "Australia now stands ready to assume its responsibility in responding to this challenge, both at home and in the negotiations that lie ahead across the community of nations." Mr Rudd told the conference Australia had already committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent on 2000 levels by 2050. He said the review by economist Ross Garnaut would drive Australia's decisions on short- and medium-term targets. "They will be cognisant of the science and they will set the Australian economy firmly on the path to achieving our commitment to a 60 per cent reduction in emissions by 2050." Negotiations are intensifying over a draft proposal at the UN conference which calls for developed nations to aim to reduce global emissions by 25 to 40 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020. Mr Rudd said the Bali conference "must agree to work towards a shared global emissions goal". "A goal that, on the best advice available, recognises the core reality that we must avoid dangerous climate change," he said. But the targets also needed to be backed by "sustained action", Mr Rudd said as he outlined Australia's plans for an emissions trading scheme by 2010, and increase renewable energy to 20 per cent of national supply by 2020. "For Australians, climate change is no longer a distant threat," he said. Both developing and developed nations needed to work to fight climate change, he said. Australia would work to "build bridges between nations" as the world pursued a new global pact by the end of 2009, Mr Rudd said. "We expect all developed countries to embrace a further set of binding emissions targets and we need this meeting at Bali to map out the process and timeline for this to happen," he said. "And we need developing countries at Bali to map out the process and timeline for this to happen."

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FarmOnline

Old Premier unveils new climate change council

Renowned scientist and environmentalist, Dr Tim Flannery, will be a member of the Queensland Government's new Council on Climate Change. Qld Premier, Anna Bligh, said the 16-member advisory panel would ensure Queensland's efforts in addressing climate change were informed by the best available knowledge and experience. The panel will include Peter Kenny, president of Agforce. "I am thrilled that Dr Flannery - the 2007 Australian of the Year - will be joining us on the Council," Ms Bligh said. "He is a world renowned author on environmental and conservation issues and he has made an enormous contribution to the debate on climate change.

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"He is at the forefront of new thinking on climate change and I am sure he will be able to provide us with valuable advice on mitigating and adapting to this global problem." Ms Bligh said Dr Flannery would be joined on the Council by other notables such as the President of the Australian Conservation Foundation, Professor Ian Lowe, and the CEO of the Clean Energy Council, Dominique La Fontaine. "I will chair this council and deputy chair will be the Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation, Andrew McNamara," she said. "Climate change is a global problem that will affect every Queensland community, region and business. "Our Government has already responded with some key strategies and initiatives, including ending broadscale clearing of native vegetation, the ClimateSmart 2050 strategy and the Climate Smart Adaptation Action Plan. "Yesterday we also announced three major climate change initiatives targeting government use of planes, buildings and automobiles. We expect these three initiatives alone will reduce total carbon dioxide emissions by 314,000 tonnes a year by 2017. "Through this Council, we will work collaboratively with the brightest and most experienced industry practitioners, community members and experts on climate change."

The Climate Change Council members are:

- * Anna Bligh, Premier of Queensland
- * Andrew McNamara, Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation
- * Dr Tim Flannery, director, South Australian Museum
- * Professor Ian Lowe, Emeritus Professor, Griffith University
- * Dominique La Fontaine, CEO, Clean Energy Council (formerly the Business Council for Sustainable Energy)
- * Sam Mostyn, group executive, Insurance Australia Group (IAG)
- * Fiona Wain, CEO, Environment Business Australia
- * Tony Mooney, councilor, Townsville City Council
- * Ross Willims, vice president commercial relations, BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA)
- * Grant King, managing director, Origin Energy
- * Chris O'Connell, general manager, Network Ten Brisbane
- * Molly Harriss Olsen, director, Eco Futures Pty Ltd
- * Jim McKnoulty, chairman, Conics Limited
- * Professor Chris Cocklin, pro-vice Chancellor, Faculty of Science, Engineering and IT, James Cook University
- * Peter Cosier, member of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists
- * Peter Kenny, general president of AGFORCE

Rudd earns warm praise at Bali climate summit

The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, has told world leaders in Bali that climate change is the defining challenge of this generation and says Australia stands ready to properly respond. He told delegates at the United Nations climate change conference that Australia would commit to "real" and "robust" short and medium term targets to cut greenhouse gases but not until the Garnaut review is finished next year. Mr. Rudd received applause as he was introduced at the high-level segment of the Bali talks after earlier handing over the instrument of ratification of the Kyoto Protocol to UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon. "I believe climate change is now one of the greatest moral and economic challenges of our time," he said. Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, congratulated Mr. Rudd for ratifying Kyoto so quickly after his election. Mr. Rudd said tackling climate change would not be easy but vital to the world's future. He said Australia had committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent on 2000 levels by 2050. He said the review by economist Ross Garnaut would drive Australia's decisions on short and medium term targets.

VFF releases new paper on climate change

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) released a document today which outlines a range of policy options to help agriculture evolve and adapt to climate change. VFF president, Simon Ramsay, says agriculture will be critically affected by climate change unless governments engage the industry in the debate. He says Australian delegates to this week's UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bali must prioritise the advice of the farm lobby. A holistic approach to managing climate change is about adaptation as well as prevention, he says. "The farm sector is exposed more than any other industry to the threat of climate change in Australia. No other industry relies on climate to the extent that agriculture does in the food production process. There are many risks associated with climate change but the greatest risk is that of bad policy," Mr. Ramsay says. "Government must

engage with farmers to ensure equitable climate outcomes are achieved for agriculture. Emphasis must be placed on management, as well as prevention, and the VFF has worked with farmers to produce a document that will assist us in moving forward. "Australian farmers are the best in the world at innovation and adapting to harsh climates, it's only sensible that farmers be given a seat at the table when it comes to climate change policy. The only way for agriculture to move forward through the climate change crisis, is for Government to work with farmers to formulate strong policy that will ensure a long-term vision for our industry.

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"Victorian farmers call on the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and Victorian Premier, John Brumby, to provide strong representation for Australian farmers in Bali and strong adaptation policy at home. "Today's document entitled, Climate Change: a Framework for Investment, addresses areas including communication, mitigation, innovation, climate risk management and infrastructure. It provides a broad discussion on climate change and the areas that Government will need to address domestically."

Farmers urged to be part of carbon emissions trading

The farm sector should waste no time in being part of an emissions trading scheme, according to the former head of ABARE, Dr Brian Fisher, because farmers are going to have to bear the costs of emissions trading whether they're part of a scheme or not. In Canberra last week Dr Fisher, who was the executive director of ABARE (the Australian Bureau of Resource Economics) until September last year, said Australian agriculture would be swept up in the same way as some other industries in Europe that were not part of an emissions trading scheme, and urged farmers to be part of the debate and scheme from the start. Former Prime Minister, John Howard, last year announced details of an emissions trading scheme for Australia to commence in 2012 but the scheme initially excluded agriculture – a move welcomed by farm lobby groups. Labor has made it clear it wants farmers to be part of a scheme but the difficulty surrounding the accounting of agriculture's emissions, particularly methane from livestock, has often put agriculture's participation in a scheme in the too-hard-basket. Dr Fisher said he expects a big debate on emissions trading at a World Trade Organisation (WTO) level before too long. He alluded to tensions rising in countries that have emissions trading schemes under the Kyoto protocol who are competing for trade with developing countries (currently not part of Kyoto), adding it's unlikely there will be much progress in the short term with developing countries taking on targets. But Dr Fisher said further to that is the experience in Europe which Australian farmers must pay close attention to. "There's been this discussion about agriculture being excluded as a sector from emissions trading," he said. "When you look at what's happened in Europe to those sectors that have been excluded they ended up getting screwed, to put not to fine a point on it. "Basically what happens if you're excluded is you weren't in the game of having permit allocations, so you were dealt out of that game, yet you still had the costs associated with an emissions trading scheme."

Rudd sidesteps emission targets at Bali

The Rudd Government is not yet committing the nation to tough emissions reduction targets being flagged at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali but the farm sector faces a potentially hefty climate change bill anyway. The Australian farm sector is caught between three forces arising from climate change, each of them likely to impose additional strains on an industry that is already highly cost-sensitive. As well as shouldering its own share of emissions reduction strategies, agriculture is uniquely exposed to the on-ground impacts of climate change, and to the additional overheads of climate change measures imposed on other sectors like the transport and fertiliser industries. Bali promises to be a turning point in Australia's engagement with the international rules of climate change although the Rudd government seems unlikely to adopt the 25-40 per cent drop in emissions over 12 years that has been put on the table by the United Nations. Australia's climate change response is likely to be made only after a review of the situation is tabled by Professor Ross Garnaut in mid-2008. Professor Garnaut has described climate change as "a diabolical policy problem", an assessment shared by those negotiating the issues on behalf of agriculture.

The Australian - Rudd playing hardball with US

Kevin Rudd has demanded the US join the rest of the developed world in embracing targets to slash carbon emissions, insisting all developed nations must accept their responsibility for fighting climate change. The Prime Minister told the UN climate change conference in Bali that global warming was threatening Australian natural wonders such as the Great Barrier Reef, Kakadu and rainforests, killing rivers and exposing people to more frequent and ferocious bushfires. Mr Rudd's comments yesterday came as the US became a focus of increasing criticism at the conference, with Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono warning that the push to tackle climate change would fail without a greater commitment from the world's richest nation, which is the only developed country yet to ratify the Kyoto Protocol for cutting carbon emissions. Mr Rudd, whose cabinet ratified Kyoto last week in its first decision after its victory in last month's election, did not mention the US by name yesterday but left no doubt as to his expectations of the world's largest carbon emitter. "We need all developed nations - all developed nations - those within the framework of Kyoto and those outside that framework - to

embrace comparable efforts in order to bring about the global outcomes the world now expects of us," Mr Rudd said. "We expect all developed countries to embrace a further set of binding emissions targets and we need this meeting at Bali to map out the process and timeline in which this will happen." Hundreds of delegates from around the world are meeting in Bali to establish a road map for the negotiation of a new emissions reduction deal, which will take effect after the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012. Negotiations must be complete by 2009.

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Mr Rudd, in his first international outing as Prime Minister, continued to refuse to quantify his preferred targets yesterday, despite a push within the conference for participants to agree to adopt emission reduction targets of between 25 per cent and 40 per cent by 2020. A reference to this medium-term target is likely to be removed from a statement being negotiated at the conference after pressure from the US, Japan and Russia. Mr Rudd has committed to only a 60 per cent reduction by 2050, but has reserved the right to delay a decision on short- and medium-term action until he receives a report from economist Ross Garnaut next year. However, Mr Rudd significantly hardened his climate-change rhetoric, leaving no doubt he will embrace further cuts and warning that the consequences of inaction on climate change would be more serious than the cost of action. "For Australians, climate change is no longer a distant threat, it's no longer a scientific theory," Mr Rudd said. "It's an emerging reality. Our rivers are dying, bushfires are more ferocious and more frequent, our unique natural wonders - the Great Barrier Reef, Kakadu, our rainforests - are now at risk." He said the challenges of climate change transcended "the old ideological, political and developmental divide" and demanded global action. "The community of nations must reach agreement. There is no plan B. There is no other planet that we can escape to. We only have this one," he said. He also acknowledged the legitimacy of the aspirations of developing nations to improve the lives of their citizens, committing his Government to fighting global poverty and assisting the developing world on climate change with financial incentives and sharing of new technologies. After warm applause from the conference in recognition of his decision to reverse the Howard government's refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, Mr Rudd said his Government would revive Australia's long tradition of involvement in multilateral engagement. "In the past we've been willing to put our shoulder to the wheel," Mr Rudd said. "What I say to this conference is that under the Government that I lead, we are doing so again." Dr Yudhoyono, host of the conference, said all developed countries must be involved in the post-Kyoto framework. "We must ensure that the United States of America, as the world's biggest economy ... and the world leader in technology is part of such a post-2012 arrangement," Dr Yudhoyono said. "Because, otherwise we will not be able to effectively address the climate-change issue." He also called on developed nations to accept that poorer nations must continue to develop. While developing nations had to do their part in tackling climate change, advanced nations needed to understand their difficulty, he said. "We must keep in mind that many in developing countries worry not about cars, airconditioning or cell phones, but whether they will have food on their plates," he said. "We must all do something differently and do something more." Dr Yudhoyono said Indonesia was devoting its efforts to preserving 22 million hectares of rainforest to provide carbon sinks. It had planted 89 million trees this year and was cracking down on illegal logging.

Rudd's address to the UN conference

Kevin Rudd's full address to the UN climate change conference in Bali, shortly after the Prime Minister formally ratified the Kyoto protocol: His Excellency, the President of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, His Excellency, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, fellow national Leaders, Ministers, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, and all people of goodwill committed to the future of our planet. I join with the Secretary-General and with the President of the Indonesian Republic in expressing our combined condemnation of this obscene terrorist attack in Algiers. An attack on innocent civilians, an attack on the agents of peace, those working for the United Nations, and therefore, an attack on us all. And I join with them in extending our thoughts and our prayers to those directly affected by this obscene attack. A little over a week ago I had the honour of being elected as Australia's 26th Prime Minister. In my first act as Prime Minister, I signed the formal instrument for Australia to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. And just a few moments ago I handed, personally, that instrument of ratification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I did so, and my Government has done so, because we believe that climate change represents one of the greatest moral, economic and environmental challenges of our age. Australia now stands ready to assume its responsibility in responding to this challenge – both at home and in the complex negotiations which lie ahead across the community of nations. For Australians, climate change is no longer a distant threat. It is no longer a scientific theory. It is an emerging reality. In fact, what we see today is a portent of things to come. In Australia, our inland rivers are dying; bushfires are becoming more ferocious, and more frequent; and our unique natural wonders – the Great Barrier Reef, Kakadu, our rainforests – are now at risk. This will sound familiar to many of our Pacific neighbours who are experiencing the impacts of rising sea levels, more frequent severe weather events and

diminishing access to fresh water. And regrettably it is now an increasingly familiar story across the globe, as reflected in the critical conclusions of the Fourth IPCC Report released last month. Climate change is the defining challenge of our generation. Our choice will impact all future generations. This is, therefore, a problem which requires a global solution. It requires a multilateral solution. Unilateral action is not enough. We must all share the burden. Australia has a long tradition of multilateral engagement: Australia was a founding state of the United Nations at San Francisco in 1945; the Cambodian Peace Settlement; the Chemical Weapons Convention; and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

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Australia was, in fact, among the first to sign the Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992. In the past we have been willing to put our shoulder to the wheel. And what I say to this conference today is that under the Government I lead, we are doing so again. For too long sceptics have warned of the costs of taking action on climate change. But the costs of action are far less than the costs of inaction. We must lift our national and international gaze beyond the immediate horizon - to comprehend the magnitude of the economic and environmental challenge that is unfolding before us. Action to tackle climate change will not be easy. It will require tough choices. And some of these will come at a political price. But unless we act, the long-term costs will threaten the security and the stability of us all. The truth is that we – the community of nations – are in this together. The truth is that this challenge of climate change transcends the old ideological, political and developmental divide. As our host, President Yudhoyono, said to me when we met yesterday, there can be no North or South, given the dimensions of this challenge. Together we are custodians of the planet. Together we are custodians of the planet's future. That's why these deliberations here are so important. That is why climate change is a top priority of the new Australian Government. We have embraced a comprehensive plan of action. The Government has committed to reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent on 2000 levels by 2050. Last year – when my party was not in government – we commissioned a major study to help us to set shorter term targets along the way. This study, the Garnaut Review, will report in mid 2008. Together with modelling underway in the Australian Treasury, and also critically, informed by the science, this review will drive our decisions on short and medium term targets. These will be real targets. These will be robust targets. And they will be targets fully cognisant of the science. And they will set Australia firmly on the path to achieving our commitment of a 60 per cent reduction in emissions by 2050. But it is not enough just to have targets. We have to be prepared to back them with sustained action – because targets must be, must be translated into reality. Australia will implement a comprehensive emissions trading scheme by 2010 to deliver these targets. We will increase the proportion of renewable energy to 20 per cent of our national electricity supply by 2020. We will invest in research and development to deliver transforming technologies. But whatever one country does alone, it will not be enough. This conference must agree to work together on a shared global emissions goal. A goal that, on the best advice available, recognises the core reality that we must avoid dangerous climate change. We must now move forward as a truly 'United Nations' with developed and developing countries working in parallel. We expect all developed countries to embrace a further set of binding emissions targets – and we need this meeting at Bali to map out the process and timeline in which this will happen. And we need developing countries to play their part – with specific commitments to action. And we need all developed nations, all developed nations – those within the framework of the Kyoto Protocol, and those outside the framework – to embrace comparable efforts in order to bring about the global outcomes the people of the world now expect of us. The approach we take must be comprehensive and must incorporate critical challenges, including deforestation. Australia believes that action on climate change and action on development must proceed in tandem. We understand that development is a top priority. We strongly support the Millennium Development Goals, reinforced by our policy as a new Government of Australia, to increase our level of ODA from current levels to 0.5 of GNI by 2015. We must all respect the aspiration of developing nations to secure their economic development and deliver rising living standards for their people. But failure to act on climate change will make the development goal even harder to achieve. Australia recognises the particular responsibility of the developed countries to assist developing nations in this process of transition: in the form of technology transfer; in the form of financial incentives; and in the form of support for adaptation. Around the world, great steps forward are being taken by individuals, by households, businesses, communities, organisations, scientists and governments. But the effectiveness of all those efforts rests on the negotiations that begin here. As we work towards achieving a new global compact in 2009, Australia is committed to working hard to build bridges between nations with differing circumstances and differing outlooks. The world expects us to deliver binding targets. The world expects us to deliver specific commitments. It expects us all to pull together and for us all to do our fair share. The Government I lead is only 10 days old. It is a Government that is realistic about the difficult challenges ahead, particularly in the two years leading up to the Copenhagen conference. It is a Government now prepared to take on the challenge, to do the hard work now and to deliver a sustainable future. The community of nations must reach agreement. There is no Plan B. There is no other planet that we can

escape to. We only have this one. And none of us can do it alone. So let's get it right. The generations of the future will judge us harshly if we fail. But I am optimistic that with clarity of purpose, clear-sightedness, courage and commitment we can prevail in this great task of working together to save our common planet.

Nats push for COAG water talks

The Nationals and a peak farming body have turned on state and federal Governments over the omission of the Murray-Darling from next week's Council of Australian Governments meeting.

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As reported in The Australian, the issue has been passed over out of deference to non-Murray-Darling states and the crowded health and education agenda of the meeting. But Victorian Nationals leader Peter Ryan said he was astonished it would not be discussed at the December 20 COAG meeting in Melbourne. "Water should be agenda items 1, 2 and 3 on the first COAG meeting involving the new Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd," he said. "This week's report that Murray River storages are at their lowest level for early summer since 1940 has highlighted the crisis in water security." The \$10billion federal takeover of the Murray-Darling remains stalled after talks between Victoria and the Howard government broke down. Victoria has refused to sign former prime minister John Howard's proposal, which was broadly supported by Mr Rudd, mainly because it wants to retain control over water allocations. Victorian Farmers Federation president Simon Ramsay said COAG was the perfect opportunity to discuss the impasse. "We can't afford to be placid on this issue in relation to getting support from all states to manage the lack of inflow in the basin and the allocation of water to those states," he said. "It's too important to allow this issue to go on for much longer. The Murray-Darling Basin Commission has now identified that we are now at risk in relation to the amount of water in the basin." But National Farmers Federation water taskforce chairman Laurie Arthur said new federal Water Minister Penny Wong had indicated she would meet the states to try to strike a deal soon after she returns from Bali, where she is attending the UN conference on climate change. Mr Arthur said he understood the VFF's concern about COAG and action needed to be taken, but he said some irrigators were troubled by the rapid changes in the sector. He said he believed there was sufficient goodwill for a deal to be reached but the issues of Victoria's quest for control over allocations, the duplication between the Murray-Darling Basin Commission and the proposed Murray-Darling Basin Authority, and the establishment of procedures for managing droughts would have to be ironed out. The Rudd Government would not comment on the omission of the Murray-Darling from the COAG agenda.

See threat as opportunity: Ban – Right on.

The UN Secretary-General believes the world can deal with climate change without major financial pain, provided it acts now and makes an economic virtue out of developing green energy sources. Ban Ki-moon has also warned that only co-ordinated global action involving all nations can deal with the threats of climate change. Addressing the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali yesterday, Mr Ban said there was no longer any scientific doubt that climate change was real and would cause rising sea levels, droughts and higher temperatures. "The time for prevarication is over," Mr Ban said, describing the problem as "the defining challenge of our age". "Climate change is happening. The impact is real," he said. "We can still address the problem in ways that are both affordable and promote prosperity." Mr Ban said there was no trade-off between tackling climate change and pursuing development. It was possible to achieve both aims by developing scientific answers to reduce carbon emissions, ushering in a new age of industrial development and treating the problem not as a threat, but an opportunity. "This shift toward a greener future is in its infancy and needs more nurturing," he said. Mr Ban also said all nations had to accept the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities on climate change, noting that the problem had been largely caused by developed nations and that those least responsible would bear the greatest consequences. "Our atmosphere cannot tell the difference between emission from an Indonesian factory, the exhaust from a North American SUV or deforestation in South America," he said. "We must be fair in reflecting the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Climate change affects us all but it must now affect us all equally." Developing nations, Mr Ban said, must continue to lead the effort to tackle climate change, particularly by developing a new prosperity through sustainable solutions. "This is the moral challenge of our generation," he said. "Not only are the eyes of the world upon us, more importantly, succeeding generations depend on us. We cannot rob our children of their future. "Let us turn the climate crisis into a climate compact."

Targets to be taken out of pact

Reference to non-binding targets is likely to be stripped from the road map for global climate change negotiations to be launched by the UN conference at Bali. The US, Japan and Russia are reported to be pushing hard for the removal of any reference to developed countries needing to make cuts of between 25 and 40per cent by 2020. The US is also opposing any quantified national emission commitments by developing countries, saying this could turn the new global deal after 2012 into another Kyoto Protocol, which it refuses to ratify.

Opening the high-level talks yesterday, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said any agreement on targets would need further negotiation beyond Bali, indicating he did not want the current impasse to impede work on a new post-2012 climate deal. "Some time down the road we have to agree on that (targets)," he told reporters. "At this time, we need to launch these negotiations to discuss in a detailed manner how the international community should address this issue on an urgent basis. We need to work hard during the remaining three days to agree on a road map to launch these negotiations and, by the weekend, I'm reasonably convinced that we will be able to agree on all these issues."

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The EU has been pushing hard for the Bali mandate, which will guide the terms of any new climate deal, to make specific reference to the most aggressive emission reduction targets mentioned by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The Pew Environmental Centre yesterday said the US was pushing for removal of all text referring to the underlying science, including a reference to halving global emissions by 2050, which has been opposed by some developing countries. Australia's evolving position reiterated yesterday by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is that the draft text should refer to, and be guided by, the full science and not just the specific reference to one target. US negotiators yesterday said they recognised the science and the need for a long-term goal to cut emissions. The inclusion of targets risked predetermining the formal negotiations which will conclude at Copenhagen in 2009, they said. "The reality in this business is that once numbers appear in text, it predetermines outcomes and it tends to drive negotiations in one direction," said lead US negotiator Harlan Watson. "We want to be sure that the text we have before us is going to be neutral." A fresh draft of the crucial Bali road map retains the controversial reference to targets for the time being, and will be finalised by the world's environment ministers in high-level meetings today. The relatively soft language of the text requires calling for emissions reduction commitments for developed countries and measurable and reportable actions by developing countries. Negotiations to establish mechanisms to transfer abatement technologies between developed and developing countries have broken down at Bali. The talks have been unable to find a practical way of preserving the intellectual property rights of developers and fast-track deployment. Australian Conservation Foundation director Don Henry said Mr Rudd had positioned Australia well at these negotiations starting with the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. "He's keeping his options on the details," Mr Henry said. "The negotiations are washing around here and he's obviously ruling out a commitment to binding targets here."

Adelaide Advertiser - Murray hits record low

The water level of the River Murray has dropped below sea level at Murray Bridge – the first time such a low has been recorded during the drought. SA Water figures show the level at its Murray Bridge station fell 14cm over the weekend and was 11cm below sea level yesterday. On Monday, the level was 9cm below sea level before recovering slightly to be 5cm above sea level on Tuesday. Strong winds on Monday, combined with evaporation and the lack of water being released over Lock 1 at Blanchetown to replenish downstream levels, caused the record low level. Murray Bridge Rowing Club member Mike Brown said rowers no longer could launch their boats from the wharf because of the low level. "It is as low as I have ever known it," he said. The fall is a sign of the drought's severity but there still is enough water in the river for recreational activities and SA Water pumps still can access the river. In September, it was predicted water levels below Lock 1 would fall to 50cm below sea level by April because of the lack of flows on the vital river system. The latest report of the Murray Darling Basin Commission shows:

MORE algal blooms and higher salt levels have been predicted for SA as the drought continues to impact on river levels.

THE past two years have been the lowest two-year inflow period for the Murray since records began.

TOTAL Murray storage is about 550 gigalitres lower than this time last year and the lowest for this time of year since 1940 when storage capacity was only about 20 per cent of current capacity.

CONTINGENCY planning is under way to ensure there is sufficient water for critical human needs in 2008-09. The two-monthly bulletin on the river also has given dire warnings about further cuts in water entitlements next year if the drought persists.

Climate changing fashion

Australia soon may follow the lead of U.S clothing companies and hire climatologists to shape the season's fashion trends. As once-orderly seasons become increasingly unpredictable, such manufacturers as Target U.S. are establishing "climate teams" to provide advice on what kind of apparel to sell at what time of the year. Target Australia will not be employing a specialised climatic group. However, Target spokesman Daniel Ellis said: "Climate change is placing challenges on the traditional timing associated with seasonal releases. "We know there are various climates across Australia at any given time and we are spending more time and effort looking at how we can ensure the right product is in the right stores throughout the year." This year's late arrival of winter saw many Adelaide retailers struggle to sell stock. State Retail Association executive director John

Brownsea said enlisting the help of weather experts "wasn't a bad idea". "If a season is six weeks late retailers can lose a lot of money waiting for the billions of dollars of stock to be shifted," he said. Designer Melanie Garland, of local label Little Potty Red Shoes, said she was changing her range. "We are now doing only four coats, one pant and one or two knits in the next winter range. The rest has to be trans-seasonal to sell," she said.

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FarmOnLine

Brumbies must go from Kosciusko says green group

The Colong Foundation for Wilderness says there should be no back down from the policy of removing brumbies from Brumbies Kosciusko National Park. Foundation director, Keith Muir, says he is disturbed by reports that NSW National Parks is buckling under pressure from the Bush Users Group (BUG). Mr. Muir says BUG has a "vision for a herd of managed feral horses" in the Kosciusko Park. He fears National Parks is about to throw its draft horse management plan in the "rubbish basket" to stop attacks from BUG. Mr. Muir says any back down would expose Kosciusko to serious degradation from increasing numbers of wild horses (brumbies). Mr. Muir says 300,000 feral horses are running wild in Australia which is unfair on farmers who have to control feral animals and so should national parks to protect their "livestock" - native flora and fauna.

Rudd says US must be part of global warming rules

Kevin Rudd has called on the US to shoulder the same effort as other rich countries in a new global climate agreement during an address to the UN conference in Bali yesterday. The Prime Minister described climate change as "the defining challenge of our generation". But Mr. Rudd continued to avoid stating support for the strong wording of the draft deal under negotiation in Bali which says developed countries will be required to make cuts of 25 to 40 per cent in their greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. A few hours after Mr. Rudd spoke, the head of the US delegation, Paula Dobriansky, said bluntly that the US did not support the wording on the need for deep cuts by developed nations. She said the language "pre-determines" the outcome of a final agreement, to be signed in 2009. The US opposition has created deep divisions at the Bali talks with Europe and many developing nations - including the host, Indonesia - strongly supporting the wording. Making a pointed reference to the US, Mr. Rudd told the conference that the world needed all developed nations "to embrace comparable efforts in order to bring about the global outcomes the world now expects from us". Four of his cabinet ministers - the Climate Change Minister, Penny Wong, the Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, the Treasurer, Wayne Swan, and the Foreign Affairs Minister, Stephen Smith - were in the main hall to watch Mr. Rudd and other speakers. The Prime Minister said Australia was committed to short-and medium-term emissions targets but these would be set next year, after Professor Ross Garnaut's report was delivered. But his key message was that the US needed to be brought into the new climate agreement, a point pressed by the Indonesian President, who said the US was the world's biggest emitter and most important technology driver, and climate change would not be effectively addressed without it. * MARIAN WILKINSON, the Sydney Morning Herald, a Fairfax Media newspaper.

NEWS.com.au - Great Barrier Reef is 'doomed'

It is probably too late to save the Great Barrier Reef and other coral reefs from global warming. Even if governments implement far-reaching measures to cut greenhouse gas emissions, they will not prevent the annihilation of coral reefs around the world. These are the conclusions of analysis by leading marine scientists to be published today in the prestigious journal *Science*.

'Terrible future' - "There is a terrible future in front of us for the reefs," said Canada-based United Nations University professor Peter Sale, one of 17 authors from seven nations of the *Science* paper. On Wednesday, Kevin Rudd told the UN's Bali climate change conference that global warming was threatening Australian natural wonders such as the Great Barrier Reef, Kakadu National Park and rainforests, killing rivers and exposing people to more frequent and ferocious bushfires. The scientists present three scenarios for the future of coral reefs - the world's largest lifeforms - under different climatic conditions. If current conditions continue, with the stabilisation of temperatures and emissions at today's level of 380 parts per million (ppm), reefs will survive but undergo fundamental changes.

'Stabilisation not possible' - However, scientists agree that stabilisation of current conditions is not possible. The paper warns that if emissions rise to between 450 and 500 ppm, with an associated temperature rise of 2C by 2050 - the most optimistic outcome predicted by the landmark study by British economist Nicholas Stern - reefs will suffer "vastly reduced habitat complexity and loss of biodiversity". But if they rise above 500ppm, the minimum emission level forecast by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change by 2050, reefs will

become "rapidly eroding rubble banks". "These changes will reduce coral reef ecosystems to crumbling frameworks with few calcareous corals," the paper says. "It is clear that coral reefs as we know them today would be extremely rare." The scientists determined that the concentration of carbon monoxide in the earth's atmosphere of 380ppm was 80ppm higher than it has been for 740,000 years, and probably for as long as 20 million years. Professor Sale, who is in Brisbane this week for a World Bank-sponsored marine science conference, said there was no point speculating about the outcome for reefs in the worst-case scenarios outlined by the Stern and IPCC reviews, of temperature rises as high as 6C. "In the best-case predictions, with temperature rises of 2C by 2050, the outlook can hardly be more dire," he said.

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'Radical measures' would help - However, he said some damage could be averted if radical measures were introduced to curb emissions. "There is a ray of hope, but it is fading fast." Climate change sceptic Bob Carter, a James Cook University researcher, said while he was not familiar with the *Science* paper, caution needed to be exercised about "alarmist" climate modelling. "Too often these climate models are basically PlayStations which have not been validated scientifically," Dr Carter said. But the lead author of the *Science* paper, University of Queensland professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, said the \$7billion Great Barrier Reef tourism industry was at risk. "With conservative estimates predicting emission levels exceeding 500ppm, coral reefs will dwindle into insignificance," Professor Hoegh-Guldberg said. "These changes dwarf anything that happened in the Ice Age transitions and they are happening faster than Stern and the IPCC predicted. The outlook is very grim."

'100 million livelihoods at risk' - Another author of the paper, World Bank marine adviser Marea Hatzios, said the collapse of coral reefs would destroy the livelihood of 100 million people. Food supplies to millions more would be reduced; in Asia, reefs supply 25 per cent of fish, feeding one billion people.

Troubled Bali talks enter final day

Al Gore yesterday delivered a rousing call for the world to fight against climate change without the US, which he accused of blocking tactics at the key UN conference in Bali. Negotiators at the Indonesian resort island grappled over deadlocked text early today, just hours before the talks were to conclude. But delegates saw little hope of any early breakthrough on the biggest problem. To warm applause at a conference side event, Mr Gore took the lash to US President George W. Bush and demanded tough commitments to crack down on the greenhouse-gas emissions that drive global warming. Mr Gore, who narrowly lost the US presidential election to Mr Bush in 2000, told the packed conference room that he was no longer in office and "not bound by diplomatic niceties". "So I am going to speak an inconvenient truth," said Mr Gore, referring to the climate film that won him an Oscar. "My own country, the United States is principally responsible for obstructing progress here in Bali. We all know that," he said to loud cheers. "But my country is not the only one that can take steps to ensure that we move forward from Bali with progress and with hope." Environment ministers and representatives from more than 180 countries have until today to agree a framework for tackling global warming past 2012, when pledges under the Kyoto Protocol, boycotted by Mr Bush, expire. Hailing growing local efforts in the US to fight global warming, the newly minted 2007 Nobel peace laureate urged the conference to be hopeful that the next president who succeeds Mr Bush in 2009 will take action. "You can feel anger and frustration, and direct it at the United States of America," said Mr Gore. "Or you can make a second choice, you can decide to move forward and do all of the difficult work that needs to be done and save a large open blank space in your document and put a footnote by it that says this document is incomplete." "Over the next two years, the United States is going to be somewhere it isn't right now. You must anticipate that," he said. The White House denied its delegation was playing a blocking role. "I think he is incorrect," said spokeswoman Dana Perino. Despite Mr Gore's impassioned intervention, delegates were mostly consumed by the much drier work of finishing a declaration before the conference, launched on December 3, closes today. The goal is set down the parameters for negotiations that will give a quantum boost to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions and helping poor countries that are most vulnerable to climate change. The European Union, backed by developing countries, wants a reference by industrialised countries that a cut of 25-40 per cent in their emissions by 2020, compared with 1990 levels, will be a guideline for future talks. The US is opposed to the 25-40 figures, and delegates say its position is also shared by Japan, Canada and Russia. Angered by what it saw as US-led efforts to water down the final text, the EU warned of snubbing climate talks called by Mr Bush next month in Hawaii if the Bali meeting collapsed. "If we would have a failure in Bali, it would be meaningless to have the major economies meeting," said Humberto Rosa, secretary of state for the environment from EU president Portugal. The White House said: "Obviously, those comments are not constructive to a conversation where everybody wants to get together for this meeting to talk about a framework for moving forward." James Connaughton, chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, rejected blame, saying: "Every country has a negotiating position, not just the US." "We will lead, the US will lead, and we will continue to lead, but leadership also requires others to fall in line and follow." In a report issued this year, the UN's climate-change body, the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), predicted that by 2100 global average surface temperatures could rise by between 1.1C

and 6.4C compared to 1980-99 levels, stoked by heat-trapping gases from burning fossil fuels. More powerful storms, droughts, floods and rising sea levels are among the risks that will escalate in coming decades, threatening hunger and homelessness for millions, it said. Yesterday the UN's World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) reported that 2007 was set to be the seventh warmest year on record and the decade of 1998-2007 the warmest ever documented.

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1998-2007 warmest decade: UN

This year is set to be one of the warmest on record and the decade of 1998-2007 is destined to be the warmest ever documented, the UN's World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) announced at the climate talks here overnight. With 18 days left in the year, 2007 is on track for being the seventh warmest year since record-keeping began, the agency said, adding that the year had also been characterised by brutal and exceptional weather events. In the northern hemisphere, 2007 is poised to be the second-warmest year, while the average annual temperatures in the southern hemisphere have been the ninth warmest, it said. The WMO - one of the parent organisations of the Nobel-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - said its preliminary report on the world's weather for 2007 strengthened the evidence for man-made global warming. "What we are seeing is a confirmation of the warming trend seen by the IPCC reports," WMO Secretary General Michel Jarraud said as he presented the document, which is based on data collected by national weather stations and research institutions. The report was published as negotiators on the Indonesian resort island of Bali struggled over a deal that would launch two years of negotiations leading to a new global pact for tackling the greenhouse-gas crisis. Since the start of the 20th century, the global average surface temperature has risen by 0.74 degrees Celsius, but the increase has not been smooth and continuous, the WMO said. "The linear warming trend over the last 50 years, of 0.13 C per decade, is nearly twice that for the last 100 years," it said. The report's final version will be published in March 2008 in the WMO's annual brochure on the status of the global climate. Its highlights include: The 11 warmest years ever recorded have all occurred in the past 13 years. January 2007 was the warmest January in the global average temperature on record. Parts of Europe had the warmest spring ever recorded, with temperatures that were more than 4 C above the long-term monthly averages. Two extreme heatwaves gripped southeastern Europe in June and July, busting previous records with daily peaks of more than 40 C in some locations. Severe droughts gripped large parts of the western US and upper Midwest and in Australia, while China experienced its worst water scarcity in a decade, with nearly 40 million hectares of land drought-affected. Heavy flooding hit many African countries, as well as Bolivia, Uruguay, Mexico, southern China and Indonesia. England and Wales recorded their wettest May-July period since records began in 1766, suffering damages of more than \$US6 billion (\$6.82 billion). It was a devastating year for cyclones. In November, cyclone Sidr hit Bangladesh, affecting more than 8.5 million people and killing over 3000, and damaging or destroying nearly 1.5 million houses. In June cyclone Gonu made landfall in Oman, affecting more than 20,000 people and killing 50, before reaching Iran. "There is no record of a tropical cyclone hitting Iran since 1945," said the WMO. Arctic sea ice shrank dramatically. In September, at the end of the summer ice-melt season, only 4.28 million square kilometres of the Arctic Ocean was covered by ice, the lowest on record, and 39 percent below the long-term average. For five weeks between August and September, nearly 100 voyages were made through the Canadian Northwest Passage, the first time in documented history that this legendary trans-Arctic link between the Pacific and Europe had been opened to navigation.

End this climate of uncertainty

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd faces his first big test as a world leader today. After campaigning with irresistible moral force on climate change, and energised by his dramatic gesture of ratifying the Kyoto Protocol as his Government's first act, his purpose and intent going into Bali could not have been clearer. Yet despite this, and the ovation he received among international delegates, Australia's position on interim emissions cuts remains disturbingly ambiguous. Labor is caught in a bind of its own making. Having commissioned a study by economist Ross Garnaut on the economic impact of establishing short-term targets for emissions cuts, Mr Rudd is honour-bound to wait for that advice. Professor Garnaut is due to report on that by the middle of next year. Mr Rudd is right to want this information before acting. To do otherwise now could prejudice Australia's national interest. But delaying action until midway into next year is simply not plausible given the weight and urgency he has attached to this issue – Mr Rudd has skilfully built the case for addressing climate change as the defining moral and economic issue of our time. He has deftly used his mandate and his moral authority to build momentum for decisive action among previously reluctant sections of the international community. Australia's refusal to sign up with other developed nations to cuts of 25 to 40 per cent by 2020 undermines that authority.

Indeed, Mr Rudd yesterday told the United Nations climate change conference that Australia would make tough decisions to ease carbon pollution – but not just yet. Not until he receives Professor Garnaut's report and a Treasury paper on the issue. At present Mr Rudd is talking tough yet lacking the ammunition to back up his words. "We must not be distracted by the day-to-day domestic political challenge that we lose our long-term perspective," he told the conference. "Action to tackle climate change will not be easy. It will require tough choices. And some of these will come at a political price." One thing is clear – Mr Rudd is right. Action to address climate change will cost something – it will cause some pain to the Australian economy. Labor always knew this when it campaigned so forthrightly on it. It is now important that the Government capitalise on that mandate and the political momentum it has gathered.

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A Newspoll survey has found overwhelming support for decisive action to tackle climate change. Some 86 per cent of Australians want action on emissions within the next three years – the first term of the Rudd administration – according to the Newspoll commissioned by Greenpeace. Mr Rudd must now find a way of speeding up the work of Professor Garnaut. After all, severe longer-term targets have already been identified so we already know where we have to end up. Identifying how fast to get there and how it should be measured should not take so long.

The Australian - Murray Basin storage lowest since 1940

Murray-Darling Basin water storage is at its lowest since 1940 with less than 1 per cent of divertible water available for critical environmental watering needed to protect endangered species and habitats. Murray-Darling basin Commission chief executive Dr Wendy Craik said very hot weather arrived in early November with temperatures six degrees celsius above average for much of the southern part of the basin. "While there had been good rainfall in November, higher temperatures, evaporation and lower runoff kept inflows well below average. Inflows over the 2006-07 were just 55 per cent of the previous minimum on record. The two years to the end of November were the lowest two year inflows on record," she said today. Dr Craik was speaking at a national briefing on global climate in Melbourne to coincide with the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) release of preliminary global information for 2007 in Bali. Dr Michael Coughlan, head of the national climate centre of the Bureau of Meteorology, said the La Nina event was now well-established and was starting to have its effects felt in Australia. "The chances of exceeding the median rainfall for summer are between 60 and 70 per cent in a large area extending from south-east Queensland across both the northern inland and east of New South Wales." he said. "However temperatures are likely to be higher than average resulting in higher evaporation." Dr Craik said that while water quality across much of the Murray River was high, the continuing drought increased the threat of algal blooms and higher salinity, particularly in South Australia. Dr Sarah Bekessy, senior lecturer in environmental studies at RMIT University. compared the ecosystem to a champion boxer on his last legs in a title fight. "It has been delivered a knockout punch by climate change but is still teetering around the ring," she said. Dr Bekessy said the impact of climate change needed to be tackled now as the ecosystem's resilience continues to diminish rapidly. She praised the declaration by News Corporation Chairman Rupert Murdoch in May this year that News Corporation would be carbon neutral across all of its businesses by 2010. "(But) on the whole, carbon sequestration schemes, as they currently operate provide little biodiversity benefit, largely because tree plantations are more akin to an agricultural crop than a forest. "In some instances, the establishment of plantations comes at a cost of missed opportunities for biodiversity restoration," she said.

Global warming linked to drought severity

Global warming is playing a direct role in Australia's drought, with higher temperatures having a significant impact on the availability of water, scientists say. Most of southern Australia has recorded its hottest year on record in 2007 and rainfall in some areas has been higher this year than in 2006. But while there are optimistic forecasts for better than average falls over summer, higher temperatures mean much of the water is not getting into Australia's storage systems. National Climate Centre chief Michael Coughlan said it was becoming clear that the difference between the current drought conditions and those in Australia's past was that global warming was pushing the mercury higher. "Yes, we've had periods in the past where the rainfall has been reduced," Dr Coughlan said. "The big difference between those earlier periods and the last five years has been the temperatures. "The fact that the temperatures are running at record high values, suggests strongly that whenever the rain does fall it doesn't get into the rivers and our storage systems. "A lot of it gets captured by the normal vegetation and a lot of it just evaporates away simply because of those higher temperatures." Dr Coughlan was responding to the latest assessment of global climate conditions released today by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). It said the decade between 1998 and 2007 was the warmest on record, with average temperatures rising by about 0.4C. The past year was also notable for the decline in the coverage of sea ice across the globe, with the 4.8m square kilometres the lowest on record and 39 per cent below the long-term average. The WMO adopted the assessment from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which said the warming of the world's climate system was now unequivocal, with increased global air and ocean

temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice and rising sea levels. Dr Coughlan said for Australia's water supplies to get back to normal, efforts to reduce global warming were vital. "To get back to normal we need to turn the temperature down or, for some reason or other, go into a much, much wetter regime," he said. "That's not what appears to be happening. "If anything there's a tendency in the winter time for rainfall to be on the dry side, for us to have a more arid winter climate. "So how we do that is the question of how do we unscramble the egg."

The chief executive of the Murray Darling Basin Commission, Wendy Craik, said while inflows to the basin were slightly improved this year, most recent figures again showed they were heading in wrong direction. She said there was enough water to keep most permanent plantings along the river alive over summer.

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But she warned the level of the Murray in the lower lakes could plummet from its present level of one centimetre above sea level to 60cm below sea level by March next year. "The way we are operating the river is like nothing in living memory," she said.

Sceptics put their case to UN chief

A letter signed by 103 scientists who are climate change sceptics has been sent to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. At a press conference at the Bali meeting today, the scientists will release the letter publicly and outline their case downplaying the seriousness of global warming. Their letter, a copy of which has been obtained by The Australian, says climate change is natural. "It is not possible to stop climate change," the letter says. "It is a natural phenomenon that has affected humanity through the ages." The letter says the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has issued "increasingly alarming" conclusions about the impact of carbon dioxide, a non-polluting gas that is essential to plant photosynthesis. "While we understand the evidence that has led them to view emissions as harmful, the IPCC's conclusions are quite inadequate as justification for implementing policies that will markedly diminish future prosperity," the letter says. "In particular, it is not established that it is possible to significantly alter global climate through cuts in human greenhouse gas emissions." The letter says that contrary to the views of the IPCC, recent observations of phenomena such as glacial retreats, sea-level rises and the migration of temperature-sensitive species are not evidence for abnormal climate change. It says none of these changes has been shown to lie outside the bounds of known natural variability and that the average rate of warming of 0.1 to 0.2 degrees Celsius per decade recorded by satellites during the late 20th century falls within known natural rates of warming and cooling over the past 10,000 years. The letter says leading scientists, including senior IPCC representatives, acknowledge that today's computer models cannot predict climate. "Consistent with this, and despite computer projections of temperature rises, there has been no net global warming since 1998." The letter's signatories include James Cook University researcher Bob Carter and retired University of Canberra vice-chancellor Don Aitken. The letter says the focus on fighting climate change is distracting governments from adapting to the threat of inevitable natural climate variability. "Attempts to prevent global climate change from occurring are ultimately futile, and constitute a tragic misallocation of resources that would be better spent on humanity's real and pressing problems," it says.

Quicker rollout for energy smart meters

The rollout of smart meters allowing households to calculate the cost of their electricity consumption is to be accelerated. The Ministerial Council on Energy - at its first meeting to be chaired by new federal Resources and Energy Minister Martin Ferguson - yesterday decided on the minimum information the meters will collect. Smart meters are seen as a way of allowing people to take responsibility for their electricity consumption and help curb the growth in demand. Mr Ferguson said after the meeting in Perth the decision put in place a framework for the rollout of the meters nationally. The next MCE meeting early next year would discuss the cost benefit of the meters' introduction in different markets. Victoria has already committed to smart meters, while NSW Premier Morris Iemma included their introduction in his electricity reform measures announced earlier this week. "We are going to go down the path of national uniformity on smart meters and that's a decision related to the Prime Minister's overall climate change agenda," Mr Ferguson said after the MCE meeting. He said state energy ministers - all Labor - had supported Kevin Rudd's approach to climate change at the UN summit in Bali. "All the state and territory ministers expressed strong support for the direction of the Government and the desire to make a contribution to actually assist the Government meet its deadlines," Mr Ferguson said. "There is an opportunity now for state and territory governments to work very closely with the commonwealth on making real progress in a practical sense in terms of the debate about climate change." Under the Howard government, some Labor states had threatened to go their own way on climate change. Mr Ferguson said the decision on smart meters was "exceptionally important". "The last thing we wanted was any delay." Yesterday's meeting also decided on a process to select an independent board for the new Australian Energy Market Operator, which will have sole responsibility for managing the electricity and gas markets nationally from July 2009. There are currently four organisations that manage the supply of electricity and gas. The AEMO board is expected to be

operating from the middle of next year. The ministers heard that the impact on electricity generation of the drought, which earlier this year caused supply shortages and high prices, had eased but that supply conditions remained tight. However, the conditions were not likely to affect the reliability of supplies in the national electricity grid that links NSW, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania.

PM's desperate bid to keep talks alive

Kevin Rudd has described international talks in Bali aimed at tackling climate change as being "in a state of flux" and ordered Australian negotiators to act as honest brokers to prevent disaffected nations from walking away from the crucial talks.

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With developing nations continuing to pressure the US to embrace genuine targets to slash its carbon emissions, the Prime Minister warned that today's final day of negotiations would be extremely difficult and insisted the Australian delegation do "everything humanly possible" to prevent the conference from collapsing into discord. The talks have been designed to set ground rules for negotiations for all nations to commit to reducing their carbon emissions after the decade-old Kyoto Protocol on emissions reductions expires in 2012. But the conference has become increasingly bogged down by sharp differences on emissions between developed and developing countries. While developed countries want the Third World to adopt emissions cuts, many developing nations assert their right to continue with programs to alleviate poverty and demand more action from developed nations, which they accuse of having caused the problem of climate change. As the UN yesterday pressed participants to seek common ground, Mr Rudd ordered Australian negotiators to "burn the midnight oil" and take a role in bridging the divide. "I'd be deeply concerned if any party was to walk away from these negotiations," Mr Rudd said. "What I have instructed our negotiators to do is to spare no effort in trying to bridge the gap between developed countries and between developed and developing countries to make sure we have a robust mandate going forward. "I've charged our negotiators with doing everything humanly possible to bridge the gap." The key aim of the Bali conference is to set a road map for the negotiation of a post-Kyoto pact involving all nations, including the US, which is the world's biggest carbon emitter but which refused to ratify Kyoto. If delegates agree to a road map today, it will guide talks aimed at producing a final pact, including commitments to emission reductions, in Copenhagen late in 2009. Yesterday Mr Rudd, whose Government ratified the Kyoto agreement as its first official decision after its election victory last month, said he was serious about Australia meeting its responsibilities as a newly Kyoto-ratifying state. "We need to ensure there is a clear-cut commitment to a negotiating time line," he said. "We cannot delay any longer. "The challenge for policy-makers and for negotiators therefore is to make sure between now and the end of 2009 there is a robust mandate, which is inclusive of all states - major emitters, both the developed and developing world - to ensure that we get a real outcome by Copenhagen. "The means to getting to that point will be many and varied and the negotiators currently face a very complex task." On Wednesday, he told the conference the US must be part of the post-Kyoto pact. He repeated his call yesterday, insisting he was not subservient to US foreign policy. "I'm a great friend and supporter of our alliance and relationship with the US," he said. "I've always said that America is an overwhelming force for good in the world. I've also always said that an alliance with the US does not mandate automatic compliance with every aspect of US foreign policy. "The US needs to accept its share of the global burden on climate change and on greenhouse gas reduction."

Gore accuses US of blocking deal

Former US vice-president Al Gore last night called on the deadlocked world conference on climate change to forge a deal without the US, accusing Washington of obstructing progress at the talks in Bali. The newly awarded Nobel laureate told delegates that they could leave an "open space" in their framework deal and hope that President George W. Bush's successor altered the US position. "I am not an official and I am not bound by diplomatic niceties," Mr Gore said. "So I am going to speak an inconvenient truth: my own country, the US, is principally responsible for obstructing progress here in Bali. "You can feel anger and frustration and direct it at the United States of America. Or you can make a second choice: you can decide to move forward and do all of the difficult work that needs to be done and save a large open blank space in our document and put a footnote by it." But the White House slapped back at Mr Gore overnight, saying he was wrong to call the US the obstacle to success. "I think he is incorrect," spokeswoman Dana Perino said "Obviously, those comments are not constructive to a conversation where everybody wants to get together for this meeting to talk about a framework for moving forward." In a reference to Australia, Mr Gore said "change is possible", pointing to the election of Kevin Rudd, who immediately ratified the Kyoto Protocol for curbing greenhouse gas emissions. More than 180 countries have until noon today, local time, to agree on a framework for negotiations that will culminate in a pact for tackling global warming beyond 2012, when pledges under the Kyoto Protocol expire. The talks are mired in

a dispute over whether developed countries should give an early indicator of how far they are willing to cut their own emissions. The EU wants a reference by industrialised countries that a cut of 25-40 per cent in their emissions by 2020, compared with 1990 levels, will be a guideline for future talks. It says these figures are essential for showing that rich nations are serious about fixing a problem they created. The US says setting targets now would prejudice future negotiations. But Mr Gore was adamant progress had to be made at Bali. "We must leave here with a strong mandate," he said. His view mirrored that of the EU. Portuguese Environment Minister Humberto Rosa said: "We are a bit disappointed that all the world is still waiting for the US." Washington's plans to host a second meeting of major emitting countries in Hawaii next month were also under threat, with reports that German Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel had said the EU would not attend unless the hosts adopted a more constructive approach at Bali.

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White House climate change spokesman James Connoughton said the US was committed to forging agreement to start talks on a new deal but the inclusion of targets at this early stage was serving to slow negotiations. However, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change chief Yvo de Boer said an all-or-nothing situation had developed at Bali and that if agreement could not be reached by today, then "the whole house of cards basically falls to pieces" and developed countries might be left with nothing more than an extension of the Kyoto Protocol. Other than the inclusion of a reference to targets, there was also disagreement on how to frame discussions to allow the transfer of new clean technologies to developing countries, funding developing countries to adapt to climate change, and the structure under which the negotiations would proceed. Additional reporting: AFP

NEWS.com.au - Reef's future 'not hopeless'

There is still hope for the Great Barrier Reef, despite a report which says the world's coral reefs may be doomed, Environment Minister Peter Garrett says. A paper by 17 leading marine scientists from seven countries published in the prestigious journal Science today finds that even if governments slash greenhouse gas emissions, coral reefs around the world will still be wiped out. Oceans may become too acidic for coral reefs to grow within 50 years because of carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels, the scientists say. Unless carbon dioxide emissions fall in the near future, existing reefs could all be dying by 2100, with the Great Barrier Reef and Caribbean reefs among the first casualties. But Mr Garrett said it was not too late, pointing to Labor's \$200 million Reef Rescue action plan to boost the Great Barrier Reef's resilience. "This isn't new science but it's a warning bell to us all," Mr Garrett said in Bali, where he is attending the final day of the United Nations climate change conference. "Tackling climate change is one of our top priorities and one of our reasons is its impact on the reef. "While we're acting globally to reduce emissions, we're acting locally to protect the Great Barrier Reef."

Reef Rescue was the largest single commitment ever made to tackle climate change and address declining water quality of the reef, he said. "The biggest thing we can do is build up the resilience of the reef and that means boosting our actions on land," he said. "So we've got to do everything in our power to remove every other environmental threat to give the reef the best possible chance to adapt to increased temperatures." Reef Rescue includes \$146 million to stop erosion and the run-off of farm chemicals into the oceans, one of the major causes of coral damage. It also provides for water quality monitoring and a new annual audit "so that we're right on top of any other actions that we need to take", he said.

Week ending Wednesday 12 Dec 2007

Water in Storage

MDBC Storages	Full Supply Level (m AHD)	Full Supply Volume (GL)	Current Storage Level (m AHD)	Current Storage		Dead Storage (GL)	MDBC Active Storage (GL)	Change in Storage for the week (GL)
				(GL)	%			
Dartmouth Reservoir	486.00	3 906	410.10	662	17%	80	582	-6
Hume Reservoir	192.00	3 038	176.18	753	25%	30	723	-16
Lake Victoria	27.00	677	24.37	382	56%	100	282	-12
Menindee Lakes		1 731 *		31	2%	(- -) #	0	-2
Total		9 352		1 827	20%	--	1 587	-36

* Menindee surcharge capacity 2050 GL

% of Total Active MDBC Storage = 19%

NSW takes control of Menindee Lakes when storage falls below 480 GL, and control reverts to MDBC when storage next reaches 640 GL

