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Adelaide Advertiser

Water fine crackdown

SA Water officers plan to take a hard line on householders they catch breaking water restrictions. SA Water chief operating officer John Ringham said water restrictions had been in force for "long enough" for the community to be aware of them. The policy since water restrictions were implemented last October was to send a reminder notice and a warning before a fine was issued. The new rule, however, will only apply when SA Water officers witness a breach. "Friendly reminders and warning notices will still be used where we are responding to a call to the water restrictions hotline, as we are unable to verify the breach ourselves," Mr Ringham said. SA Water has fined 12 people since water restrictions came into effect on October 23 last year and has issued 6094 reminder notices and 1251 warning notices. A breach can cost householders a \$315 fine, but this can rise up to \$5000 for ongoing offences. The restrictions were altered earlier this month to allow the use of garden dripper systems and hand-held hoses on one weekend morning or evening. Last weekend's water consumption fell by 8 per cent compared to the previous weekend as gardeners were allowed to turn on the tap for the second time this spring. SA Water figures show 751 megalitres were used on Saturday and Sunday, 70 gegalitres less than during the previous weekend. Last week, SA Water warned gardeners that water restrictions could be toughened if consumption rose. Water use rose by 20 per cent at the weekend after a ban on outside watering was lifted on Saturday, October 6. Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald said water consumption was still below consumption levels in 2006, so it was a positive sign gardeners were conserving water. "An increase in water use was expected under slightly eased restrictions on outdoor watering and also because of the warmer and drier conditions we've been experiencing," she said.

Bright tips that make a difference

Households are responsible for producing 10 per cent of the state's greenhouse gases, or more than three million tonnes of emissions, each year. To help reduce emissions, households now have a new tool to calculate their contributions and learn how savings can be made. News Limited today launches its One Degree Carbon Calculator, an online tool to determine the amount of greenhouse gases a household generates in a year. News Limited, publisher of The Advertiser, has developed the One Degree Carbon Calculator as part of its continuing campaign to make a positive difference to the state and future generations. Based on the Australian Greenhouse Office's annual average household emissions of 14 tonnes, SA's households generate 3.74 million tonnes of greenhouse gases each year. The Miller family, of Colonel Light Gardens, was among the first in South Australia to use the online calculator, which found their household emits more than the average. By using an electric hot water system, incandescent light globes and other high energy-using appliances, the family of five found it emits 16 tonnes of greenhouse gases each year. Sarah Miller, 39, said the family made an effort to recycle all it could and used public transport to travel to work and school as part of its commitment to the environment. She said, however, they could do better to reduce its footprint. "It does seem a lot," she said. The online test also calculates the reduction in emissions which can be achieved if a commitment to changing household habits is undertaken.

'Misled' by mill owners

The company behind the \$1.5 billion Penola Pulp Mill misled the State Government in its case for special treatment to double the plant's original size, opponents say. The latest development comes as State Parliament is almost certain to approve the mill this week, possibly passing its final hurdle in the Upper House as early as today. A March 14 letter from Protavia director John Roche said the company had been given various approvals for a small pulp mill, but an increase in costs made an expanded plant more viable. He went on to say Protavia had "assurances and approval" from the Victorian Government for an expanded mill to be built across the border at Heywood. He asked Forests Minister Rory McEwen for special legislation supporting a larger mill, bypassing planning approvals. Six days later, Forests Minister Rory McEwen wrote back, saying he had advised Cabinet of his intention of a draft Bill to provide special development approval for an expanded mill. But yesterday a spokesman for Victorian Premier John Brumby said Protavia had approval for a small pulp mill, but not the larger one. Greens MLC Mark Parnell said yesterday it was clear South Australians had been "hoodwinked". "They've gone to the SA Government saying we've got approval for a big mill in Victoria and this is what we want from you ... the state's been played for a mug," he said. The No Pulp Mill Alliance, which has been lobbying for an Environmental Impact Statement to assess the affect on the watertable and local farmland, said the Government was duped. "Our Government was led to believe Victoria had already granted approval for this bigger mill and then moved heaven and earth to make sure we pipped them at the post," spokesman Duan Butler said. A spokesman for Mr McEwen, who is due back at work today after a heart attack seven weeks ago, said there would be no comment. But the Liberals, who are supporting the Bill, said yesterday that their judgment wasn't influenced by a claim of approval from Victoria.

Farmers could be \$3bn better off

Farmers could be almost \$3 billion a year richer if they invested in clean energy measures such as wind and carbon farming, according to a report by the nation's top science agency. The Agriculture Alliance on Climate Change (AACC) commissioned the CSIRO to examine opportunities to provide fuel, as well as greenhouse-friendly food, to the national economy. Farmers could earn up to \$1.3 billion a year, including wind royalties of up to \$263 million, by harvesting clean, renewable energy and farming carbon, the CSIRO report found. The total potential revenue, including biodiversity stewardship payments, was up to \$2.94 billion. Following the CSIRO report, the AACC made several key recommendations, including setting a clean renewable energy target of 25 per cent by 2020. "The interests of rural businesses and landholders are likely to be best served by scenarios with more ambitious mid-term emissions reduction targets, along with higher carbon prices and policies that support renewable energy deployment in the near-term," the AACC said. "It is likely that a range of clean energy technologies will be able to meet projected demand for peak and base load power to 2050 and beyond." Last month, the federal government pledged 30,000 gigawatt hours of energy each year would come from low emissions sources by 2020 - about 15 per cent of national energy consumption. Labor has backed a 60 per cent cut from 2000 levels by 2050. The AACC called for boosting biodiversity conservation on private land from six to 14 per cent nationally. "Environmental stewardship payments have the potential to address climate-related pressures on both landholders and ecosystems," it said. "Implementing an ambitious, voluntary stewardship scheme could more than double the area of actively conserved native vegetation through total outlays of \$740 million to \$1,360 million per year, some of which might be funded through the carbon value of the native vegetation protected." The AACC also recommended creating environmentally sound offsets in the rural sector, as part of a national emissions trading scheme (ETS). "Policy makers should engage the agriculture sector in the design of an emissions trading scheme so that ... agriculture has a say in how and when agriculture is included as an active participant in an ETS and complementary policies so that the sector is rewarded for early action," it said. Both the government and Labor have embraced a national emissions trading scheme. Members of the AACC include the Australian Conservation Foundation, WA Farmers Federation and The Climate Institute. The CSIRO - Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation - is Australia's national science agency.

Adelaide.now.com

Drought outlook 'grim'

Two independent reports into the impact of drought on South Australia have painted a grim outlook - including the loss of thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in revenue. Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith outlined the "wide-ranging social and community costs" in Parliament today, during an urging motion calling for action on the impact of drought. "Access Economics quarterly business outlook has revised its estimates for SA and now predicts a falling share of national output from around 7% to 6.2%," he told Parliament today. "It also identifies ongoing impact from drought as well as job losses in manufacturing industries Electrolux, Holden and Mitsubishi." Last month, chartered accountancy firm PKF updated economic modelling of the outcomes of various drought-related scenarios on the Riverland economy, Mr Hamilton-Smith said. The PKF report forecasts that if the decline in the industry continues, SA can expect a fall in regional incomes of 16 per cent as well as falls in activity in related sectors. "In summary, this represents an annual average of a 16% decline in regional incomes and in employment opportunities over the base level of activity in the economy," he said.

The Australian

Garrett challenges Turnbull to debate

Peter Garrett has thrown down a challenge to Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull, inviting him to a debate on national television. "Certainly debates have an important role to play," the Shadow Environment Minister said. "We've always said that we'll debate Mr Turnbull, and if that opportunity arises, we'd be very pleased to take it up." Mr Garrett said he was prepared to debate Mr Turnbull on television, radio, via MySpace or in any other public forum. However, he said he had never been a fan of "the worm", used to gauge audience reactions during televised debates. Mr Garrett was campaigning in his Sydney seat of Kingsford Smith this morning, handing out voting enrolment cards to University of NSW students. Many of the students, including 23-year-old Josephine Dessman from Erskineville, did not seem to know whether or not they were enrolled to vote. "I think I am, but I've got to check," Ms Dessman said. Ms Dessman said she would be voting Labor because of its environmental policies. "I feel Labor is the more environmental option -- although they're probably not very different," she said. Mr Garrett said an estimated 400,000 Australians did not enrol to vote prior to the last federal election. "We think it's absolutely critical, for the health of democracy that every young Australian gets that opportunity and knows they need to get on the roll in order to vote," he said. "Mr Howard has shortened the amount of available time for first-time voters to get on the roll and as a consequence of that, we think it's really important that people know that they've only got really until this Wednesday at 8pm," he said.

Mr Garrett was grilled by one student who wanted to know why he was in support of the pulp mill. "We certainly recognised that (Malcolm) Turnbull had set the bar too low in terms of his assessment and we were critical of that. We also recognise that what the chief scientist has now done is added an extra 24 conditions and that those conditions need to be properly monitored and scrutinised," Mr Garrett responded. Mr Garrett also said it was clear after John Howard's tax cut announcement yesterday Labor was in for a tough fight -- but he said the party would take its time to announce its own tax policies. "Both Wayne Swan and Kevin Rudd have made it absolutely clear that we will bring forward tax policies at a time of our choosing, after due deliberation of what the Government has put up at the very start of the campaign," he said.

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Committing to Kyoto would come at cost

Monday's tax cut announcement by the Coalition means the election campaign is off to a good start. Economic policy has been moved to the top of the political agenda, as it should be. Yet to date, Labor's tax policy seems to consist of nothing whatsoever. What has it been doing for the past 11 years in opposition? All the same, we can guess what Labor's fiscal policy might look like by examining some of their other policy proposals. Take climate change policy, for instance. Labor's goal is to reduce Australia's CO2 emissions to 60 per cent of 2000 emissions by 2050. This sounds fine in the abstract - but what might it mean in reality? In 2000 Australia's total emissions were about 550 mega tonnes in CO2-equivalent terms. So Labor's policy translates into a target of 330 mega tonnes of emissions by 2050. In the absence of any policy interventions, business-as-usual greenhouse emissions are projected to grow strongly. Indeed, the Australian Greenhouse Office's best-case scenario projects that even with abatement measures in place, total emissions will be about 700 mega tonnes by 2020 -- which is more than double Labor's 2050 target. By 2050, Australia's emissions will probably exceed 1000 mega tonnes. In other words, achieving Labor's target could easily be equivalent to eliminating more than 100 per cent of current activities that use fossil fuels. All of this in order to reduce global temperatures by exactly nothing. The other part of Labor's climate change policy is to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. This is a strange objective, given Kyoto is basically dead in the water. The Kyoto Protocol limits emissions to percentage changes from a 1990 baseline. The biggest problem is not with the targets themselves, but the process by which emissions cuts are supposed to be achieved. The ratifying countries were forced to agree to their Kyoto targets without knowing what the costs of meeting those targets would be. This is like agreeing to spend the rest of your life with someone you have only just met during a one-night stand. It is simply not a credible or sustainable commitment. As a result, most Kyoto-ratifying countries have failed to significantly abate their greenhouse emissions and reach their targets. And why should they? There is nothing unreasonable about exceeding emissions targets by significant amounts when you are unsure of the costs of meeting those targets. Any other course of action would be sheer folly. But Kyoto has very little to do with reasonableness. Just ask the New Zealanders. Our friends across the ditch signed up to Kyoto in December 2002, even though a 2001 National Interest Analysis on the case for ratifying the Kyoto Protocol could not decide whether moderate global warming would be detrimental or beneficial for New Zealanders. Helen Clark's Government ignored this information and committed her country to a program of reducing emissions over the 2008-12 period to 1990 levels or to take responsibility for the difference. In practice, that means hundreds of millions of Kiwi tax dollars will be paid to former Soviet Union countries, which have been lucky to accumulate carbon credits. Actually, luck has had little to do with it. The surest way for a country to reduce greenhouse emissions and accumulate carbon credits is to implement policies which wreck the economy - something at which many former Soviet Union countries excel. The New Zealand Treasury estimates New Zealand's Kyoto liability currently stands at NZ\$708 million. This doesn't sound like very much, but this guess is more than double what it was two years ago. At that rate of increase, at the end of the first Kyoto commitment period in 2012, New Zealanders will owe about NZ\$4.2 billion - or about NZ\$1000 per person. So, in a nutshell, the main effect of Kyoto will be for New Zealand taxpayers to subsidise bad economic policies by politicians in the former Soviet Union. Does Kevin Rudd have similar plans for Australia? On the one hand, ratifying Kyoto and committing to a process which has unknown costs seems to be a very strange policy, particularly for someone who constantly bombards us with claims that he is an economic conservative. On the other hand, history suggests Labor has a strong record of reducing greenhouse emissions. The only prime minister who has managed to do it was Paul Keating in the early 1990s, when he engineered "the recession we had to have" and our emissions levels plummeted. Perhaps this is exactly what Rudd has in mind. *Alex Robson is a lecturer in economics at the Australian National University*

Adelaide Advertiser

Farmers, Greens war on Labor

Kevin Rudd faces an unprecedented assault on his campaign to become Prime Minister with farmers and the Greens to attack Labor. Desperate to claw back Labor's lead, the Coalition also is poised to target high-profile Labor frontbencher Peter Garrett over his "threat" to the \$30 billion coal sector.

For the first time in more than 20 years, the National Farmers Federation will enter the election fray, attacking Labor's plan to scrap WorkChoices and the Coalition's \$2 billion communications fund. The powerful farmers' group will launch a national television campaign warning against "sliding back to the days of union-dominated strife and all-out warfare". The blitz starts this weekend. City and bush voters will be targeted. Greens' Leader Bob Brown today will savage Mr Rudd for being a policy coward on climate change and workplace relations. Senator Brown, who remains keen to strike a preference deal with Labor, also will challenge Mr Rudd to reject the Government's \$34 billion tax package in favour of funding an increase in the pension. The barrage of criticism against Labor reinforces concerns the Government will launch the "mother of all scare campaigns" to retain office. The Nationals plan to launch a robust attack on Mr Garrett, claiming he will sell-out the coal industry. A series of TV advertisements are to go to air in key electorates, including the "coal" seats of Flynn, Dawson and Capricornia in Queensland. Some coal seats in NSW, such as Hunter, near Newcastle, also may be included in the anti-Garrett campaign. Labor's environment spokesman will be targeted after previously claiming the "automatic expansion" of the coal sector was a thing of the past. He since has clarified his remarks, arguing he supports a "sustainable" coal industry. Such Nationals' MPs as De-Anne Kelly in Dawson will fire up the electorate claiming Mr Garrett would do a deal with the Greens to close the industry. Labor hard-heads have been bracing for negative advertising but they would not have been expecting the NFF to join in. NFF president David Crombie will argue against turning back the clock on workplace reforms. He has accused Labor of trying to "ransack" the \$2 billion communications fund, negotiated as a trade-off for the full sale of Telstra. He accuses Labor of putting the cities ahead of the bush. Opposition's communications spokesman Stephen Conroy last night accused the farmers of backing a "second rate" plan. "Regional and rural Australia will not be fooled by this partisan advertising," he said.

Solar lab hits the mark

Environmental issues has spurred primary school student interest in science subjects as they seek careers which will help prevent climate change. Largs Bay School students are among an increasing number eager to learn the science behind renewable technologies. They will be using The Advertiser's Solar Energy Lab in lessons to gain practical experience in electronics and solar power. More than 500 schools across South Australia will be provided with kits this week from The Advertiser's Newspapers in Education and TAFE SA to help students learn more about alternative technology. The kit includes a light, fan and music device which is powered from solar panels. TAFE SA first introduced courses to help students and tradespeople learn more about renewable technologies in 2001. It now offers a range of courses, including the national accreditation training program for technicians to install solar systems on homes. Largs Bay School Year 6 student Kerensa Spry, 12, said she loved studying science and was interested to find out more about solar power. "Solar power will help us with the environment and global warming," she said. "Instead of using coal and fossil fuels, we can change to wind power and solar power." Year 7 student Holly Groome, 13, said she was interested in a career in construction. She believed that would need a keen knowledge of renewable energy. Year 7 student Thomas Everett, 12, said the knowledge he learned through the solar energy lab project would help him pursue a career as a scientist. "Solar power is quite fascinating," he said. "It is better than burning fossil fuels and it will help with global warming and gases in the atmosphere. I think in the future we'll be making solar power cars and everything will be solar powered."

Child centre first to earn badge

Aldinga Community Child Care Centre is the first in Australia to earn a "climate neutral" badge for offsetting carbon dioxide emissions. The centre has used a carbon credit company to help it cut its energy use and offset the emissions it is responsible for, and now can use an official trademark that shows it is helping save the planet. Centre executive committee treasurer Toby Good said it was "remarkably easy" to go carbon neutral with Australian company Climate Friendly. The first step was an energy audit, which found the centre responsible for 34 tonnes of carbon dioxide in the past financial year, mostly due to electricity (23.5 tonnes). To offset its carbon dioxide emissions, the centre purchased carbon credits from Climate Friendly. "They bought renewable energy credits on our behalf," Mr Good said. "So we're climate neutral for 2006-07 and we have now switched to green power." Mr Good said the centre's newly formed carbon neutral working party is looking at other ways to reduce emissions and pay less for 2007-08. "As we continue to reduce the amount of emissions we put out there, the number of carbon credits that we have to purchase will be less as well," he said. Children at the centre enjoy doing their bit for the environment. They help their carers by planting seedlings in the yard, recycling plastic containers and hanging out the washing on the line, rather than using the power-hungry clothes dryer. There are plans to harvest rainfall and also to set up a worm farm that will make use of food scraps. Some parents are looking at alternative fuels such as biodiesel and other options for low-emission transport to and from the centre.

Climate change forecast doubts

Rising temperatures and sea levels will not be so dramatic, says Australia's former statistician. Dennis Trewin, who resigned this year after a seven-year stint as Australian Statistician, says the 6C increase in temperatures forecast as a maximum climate change rise was based on flawed economic and population assumptions. He said the economic and population forecasts used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report were much higher than had been recorded in the past three decades and were unlikely to occur. A temperature increase of 0.5C by 2030 and 1.5C by 2100 were more reasonable expectations, along with a sea level rise of 0.15m and 0.35m, he said. Mr Trewin said a 1.5C increase would still have a damaging effect on biodiversity. He is speaking at the Statistical Society of Australia SA branch's E.A. Cornish Memorial Lecture at the University of Adelaide at the Union Hall at 6pm tonight.

Gardens soak up more water

Residents used 20 per cent more water in the past financial year than in the previous 12-month period, despite eight months of restrictions. SA Water figures show residential users consumed 161 gigalitres in the 2006-07 financial year. That was 29 gigalitres up on the 2005-06 financial year. The figures show 64 gigalitres, or 40 per cent, of the residential consumption was for gardens. The water used on gardens was nearly triple the 22 gigalitres of water used by industry and four times the 14.7 gigalitres used by commercial users. Industry and commercial consumption increased slightly from 18 gigalitres and 13 gigalitres respectively. Gardeners already have responded to curb their water use by planting native gardens. The Adelaide Botanic Gardens and Nursery and Garden Industry SA say native plants which need no extra water, except for the odd bucketful in extremely dry and hot periods, are perfect for gardens to battle drought. They warn, however, that not all natives suit all backyards. Nursery and Garden Industry SA president Malcolm Lewis said many gardeners had splurged on native plants since water restrictions were introduced. Some natives, however, still would require much water, he said. "There are many exotic plants that need the same criteria as native plants," he said. "I would not plant on my own property a native plant from a very low rainfall area because it is unlikely to be suitable with the rainfall and runoff most suburban houses receive. "It is very complex. People should seek advice from a trusted and knowledgeable nursery." Botanic Garden sustainable landscapes project officer Sheryn Pitman said a good native garden would include species local to the area which would mimic nature. She said a bucket of water once a fortnight should be enough to keep many native plants surviving through long, hot, dry spells in summer. Port Elliot gardeners Sylvie Cleret and Marc Adams said the plants in their garden did not receive extra water. "Whatever God sends through rain, that's what they're getting," Ms Cleret said.

The Australian

Parties fail climate policy test

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) rates Labor well ahead of the coalition on climate change and environment policies, but still below 50 per cent. In the first of a series of progress scorecards throughout the federal election campaign, the environmental group gave Labor a 49 per cent mark against the coalition's 21 per cent. The Australian Greens gained the highest score of 93 per cent, followed by the Australian Democrats on 90. Family First fared second worst with 31 per cent. "While Labor has committed to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and the coalition hasn't, in total the major parties are failing on climate change and the environment," ACF executive director Don Henry said. "Modest or weak climate change policies, a poor performance on forests and a lack of action on water and sustainable cities means both major parties have low scores. "We are hearing a lot of talk and not seeing enough action on climate change from both major parties." Under a five-star grading system, the coalition was given zero stars for the categories of setting greenhouse targets, showing international leadership on climate change and rejecting the nuclear industry. Prime Minister John Howard has opted not to set any targets to reduce carbon emissions until next year, refused to ratify the Kyoto treaty and strongly backed nuclear power as a low-emissions energy source. Labor opposes nuclear power. The coalition's best score was two and half stars for making polluters pay and restoring rivers/securing water supplies. Labor scored four stars for its Kyoto commitment and three stars in four other categories. Despite committing to cut emissions by 60 per cent by 2050, the ACF gave Labor only one star in the category for setting the target at 2000 levels instead of 1990 and postponing a short-term target. Labor also got one star for promoting clean renewable energy. The party has yet to set a target in this area but has pledged to do so during the campaign. The ACF described the coalition's clean energy target of about 15 per cent of power generated by 2020 as weak and also gave it one star.

Adelaide.now.com

Ex-premier Dean Brown to advise on drought

Former premier Dean Brown has been appointed the State Government's special adviser on drought. Mr Brown will co-ordinate this state's responses to issues relating to the water crisis.

“The appointment of a special adviser with direct access to decision makers has proven very effective in dealing with major crises, such as the Eyre Peninsula bushfire and the Virginia floods, Premier Mike Rann said today.

“People told me they wanted a single point of access where they could get things done quickly and effectively and the bushfire recovery is now held up as a national benchmark in crisis response. “Dean Brown will work in the same way with banks, industry organisations and community service providers on the business, social and natural resource management impacts of drought to help us identify and efficiently target our drought response measures.”

NEWS.com.au

Poo can help save the planet

A cheap system to recycle human waste into bio-gas and fertiliser may allow 2.6 billion people in the world access to toilets and reduce global warming, an Indian environmental expert says. Bindeshwar Pathak, founder of the Sulabh International Social Service Organisation, said his group planned to push the system at the seventh annual World Toilet Summit, to be held in New Delhi at the end of October. The organisation is dedicated to providing toilets to nearly 730 million people in India who lack them. "The Millennium Development Goals set in South Africa in 2002 aim by 2015 to cut by half the 2.6 billion people worldwide who lack toilets and provide them to all by 2025," Mr Pathak said at a briefing ahead of the summit. He said India's contribution would be a toilet system that organically breaks down faeces into trapped bio-gas that could be burned to provide cooking fuel and electricity, and convert urine into fertiliser. "Now we want others to know about this technology which was recently installed at Kabul, Afghanistan, because it can help meet the Millennium Development Goals and reduce global warming." Founded in 2001 as a non-profit organisation, the World Toilet Organisation aims to make sanitation a key global issue and now says it has 55 member groups from 42 countries.

From Murray Darling Association Conference/AGM papers

I wonder if this could shut up some of those who continue to knock cotton & rice plantings?

“...as the climate becomes more variable it may make sense...to plant rice and cotton ... rather than persist with permanent plantings of grape, citrus and so on...”(Tim Flannery, New Scientist, 16/6/07)

“...wine grapes and citrus crops will likely be cut...while flexibility of rice and cotton...would see them being planted in greater bulk...” (Peter Cullen, National Water Commission, Australian Financial Review 3/07/2007).

Whilst these views may not be accepted by many irrigators it may come about if the inflows into the Murray-Darling Basin do not return back to what we have expected.

18th

FarmOnLine

Bankers re-affirm confidence in farming

The Australian Bankers' Association has pledged its ongoing support for the rural sector. It sees a positive future for agriculture, despite rising debt levels from the drought and problems rising from forward grain contract washouts. This was the message from a meeting held in Sydney last week. South Australian Farmers' Federation deputy chairman, James Rackham, after attending the meeting, told SA's *Stock Journal*, "What I picked up from the meeting was that there is still plenty of confidence in the industry. "One comment made was that there was nothing coming from the board level ringing the bells on agriculture. "Another comment was that the outlook for agriculture is excellent, even with the dollar at US90c. "Some farmers are travelling very well, despite all the gloom, and in the 2006-07 financial year, farm management deposits actually rose. "Also, with the total rural sector lending in Australia equating to \$43 billion from major banks, the potential debt incurred in regard to wheat swaps is minute in the overall position. "The bankers' association stressed the importance of farmers maintaining a dialogue with their banks." SOURCE: Extract from full report in the *Stock Journal*, SA, October 18.

Bold renewable energy plan adopted in US

The US House of Representatives on Monday passed a resolution that calls for 25pc of the nation's energy needs, to be met by renewable resources by 2025. It's being reported as a 'bold US energy goal'. It's seen as a major step forward in the shift to renewable fuels to replace reliance on imported oil. The full House now joins the US Senate in setting an energy policy that calls on America's farms, ranches and forest lands to provide a fourth of the energy consumed by 2025. It will come from land-based resources – biomass, biofuels, wind energy, solar power, geothermal energy and hydropower – while continuing to provide a safe, affordable and abundant supply of food, feed and fibre. "This resolution has enjoyed bipartisan Congressional support representing rural and urban constituencies," said 25x'25 Steering Committee Co-Chair Bill Richards. "It's a firm goal on the way to a secure energy future." The 25x'25 Coalition is a group of more than 600 organisations ranging from agricultural and environmental to auto manufacturers and civic groups. "We look forward to working with Congress to advance the enabling policies that will bring the 25x'25 vision to life," 25x'25 Steering Committee Co-Chair Reed Smith says.

The resolution, which was unanimously adopted by the Senate in June, springs from an expanding coalition that now includes 600 agricultural, forestry, environmental, energy, business, labour, civic and government organisations. Partners include the American Farm Bureau Federation, the Forest Resources Association, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the "Big 3" US automobile manufacturers – as well as 27 governors and 12 state legislatures. The action plan lists 35 recommendations that when implemented, would cost just 5pc of what America spent on imported oil in 2006 – but would result in dramatic increases of up to 5 million new jobs and \$700 billion in new economic activity annually while significantly reducing oil consumption and global warming emissions. Now that Congress has adopted 25x'25 as a national goal, the 25x'25 Campaign is entering a fourth phase of work in support of a new energy future for America. Efforts are focused on facilitating national partner dialogue and planning around important renewable energy transition issues including:

- Measures to protect and enhance the environment
- The use of woody biomass in a 25x'25 energy future
- Biofuel and electricity infrastructure challenges and
- Agriculture and forestry's role in a reduced carbon economy.

SOURCE: *FarmProgress*.

Drought widens on NSW's western plains

Jess, the sheep dog was keeping a close eye on things at a property near Cooreena Road yesterday, near Dubbo, NSW. Her owners were collecting hay bales. As Sydneysiders worry about the rising cost of food, the Dubbo Rural Lands Protection Board (RLPB) in the NSW western plains is focused on the welfare of the people who produce it. As more of NSW slips back into drought, Dubbo RLPB manager, Narelle Rodway, says the entire Dubbo RLPB has current and continuing drought status, after a battle with the big dry lasting years. She was speaking three days after NSW Primary Industries Minister, Ian Macdonald, confirmed that "much of the estimated NSW winter crop is now lost". A total of 79pc of NSW is now in drought, up from 71pc earlier this year. The current estimate for NSW winter crops is 3.75 million tonnes, a figure that will drop dramatically in the absence of rain. Yesterday, Ms Rodway said she knew of "one small portion in her RLPB still hoping to get a crop", southwest of Narromine. They were a little more fortunate, but they'll still need follow-up rain. Elsewhere in her RLPB, farmers have had to put stock onto their crops. "They've realised that they weren't going to be able to get anything significant," Ms Rodway said. Others have turned their wilting crops into fodder after mid-year rain had given false hope of a fresh start. "When the season turned, many people tried to put in a bit extra," Ms Rodway said. "In some cases, they had to borrow more money." Ms Rodway is encouraging those farmers to seek assistance through the likes of rural financial counsellors. "They should not self-assess," she said. Mr Macdonald advocates the use of the drought hotline for those seeking help, at 1800 814 647, and the drought help website at: SOURCE: *Daily Liberal*, NSW, and AAP

Farmers' water rally in Canberra

Up to 1,000 farmers will converge on Canberra next Monday October 22 to protest against some aspects of the Federal Government's \$10 billion water plan. The farmers will demand:

- No purchases or allocations of water for environmental flows during the drought.
- A three-year moratorium on permanent water trading out of irrigation areas.
- A revision of the concept of "over-allocation".
- Government legislation to stop managed investment schemes "grossly distorting water and agricultural markets".
- The building of an emergency weir.

Murray Darling Basin Water Crisis Management Council spokesman, Ken Trewin, said the Federal Government's \$10 billion water plan could wipe \$28 billion off the economy, or 2.9pc from the nation's GDP. He said farmers in the basin faced both a natural and man-induced drought. "The Federal water plan will take approximately 3,500,000 megalitres of water from irrigation farming for the extinguishing of licences or for environmental flows," Mr Trewin said. Farmers will rally from 9.30am to midday.

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

2.5m acres enrolled in US carbon program

Enrolment of no-till and seeded grasslands into the National Farmers Union's (NFU) Carbon Credit Program acreage, has more than doubled earlier expectations. Estimates show that around 2,400 producers in 26 states have enrolled more than 2.5 million acres in the program. The Chicago Climate Exchange has approved the NFU to enrol producer's acreage into carbon credits to be traded like agricultural commodities on the CCX. These credits are sold to companies, municipalities and individuals to offset their carbon emissions allowing producers to earn income. More than \$2.3 million in partial payments were made earlier this year to participants in the program for 2005 and 2006.

"Our nation's producers are feeding the world, fuelling the future and, through this program, playing an active role in protecting our environment," NFU president, Tom Buis, says. "I'm pleased to see such widespread support across the countryside." SOURCE: *FarmProgress*.

ABARE survey of irrigators in the Murray Darling Basin

A new ABARE survey of irrigators in the Murray Darling Basin, to collect information about the profitability of irrigation regions and the issues faced by irrigators, started on October 10 and will continue until March, 2008.

The survey will seek information on:

- Irrigated agricultural production.
- The financial situation of irrigators.
- The issues faced in maintaining farm profitability.

The survey comes as the basin is being confronted by an even tougher summer outlook than last year's, according to the head of the Murray Darling Basin Commission, Dr Wendy Craik. "Currently, there is little comprehensive or consistent information across the basin on the economic characteristics of irrigators," explains ABARE's executive director, Phillip Glyde. Mr Glyde said, "The survey is an important first step in addressing the issues facing irrigators. "Results for 2006-07 will provide a base period for examining future trends in industry performance. "Growers who participate in this survey will be making an important contribution to the development of policies and programs that will affect the future of irrigation industries." The survey is supported by the National Farmers' Federation Water Taskforce and the Horticulture Australia Council. Chairman of the NFF Water Taskforce, Laurie Arthur, said, "The NFF encourages irrigators and water users to participate in the survey. "The survey will provide important information about the value of irrigation to the Australian economy. "It will also identify future trends in the way irrigators will manage their businesses." Kris Newton, CEO, Horticulture Australia Council, says this survey will assist with benchmarking and contribute directly to the planning underway for Future Focus - The Australian Horticulture Plan. Ms Newton said, "While I recognise this is a really difficult time for growers, I strongly encourage their participation. "This survey will give the industry the information needed to develop our plans for the future and assist with planning for the recovery of the Murray Darling Basin." All information provided by growers remains confidential. ABARE will only be releasing the results from the survey as farm averages. The survey interviews are conducted on-farm by identified ABARE data collectors. The southern part of the Murray Darling Basin is being surveyed in October and December, while the northern section will be surveyed in February – March 2008. Survey results are expected to be released in June 2008. SOURCE: Rural Press national rural news, updated daily by *FarmOnline*.

More drought aid for SA

South Australian Premier Mike Rann has announced an additional \$11 million drought aid package that includes funding for three new drought coordinators for Eyre Peninsula (EP), the River Murray and northern areas. The latest assistance boosts SA Government's drought aid to nearly \$71 million. "It became obvious that following a visit I made to the EP last month, what farmers needed was an overall drought response coordinator – an expert who understands their needs, understands the region and is experienced in all aspects of drought recovery," Mr Rann said. The \$10.9m will also include:

- Funding for a Young Farmers' Package, comprising a rural leadership program to target up to 20 leaders in drought-affected regions.
- An extension of the Planning for Recovery initiative.
- Expanded off-farm employment and training through TAFE SA.
- Accelerating EC processing for Federal Government consideration. SOURCE: *Stock Journal*

SA crisis irrigator plan one step closer

The South Australian Murray Irrigators (SAMI) proposal for low-interest, long-term loans to help purchase or sell water in the coming weeks moved a step closer following meetings with two Federal MPs last Friday. The SAMI Drought Task Force had been invited by the Federal Agriculture Minister, Peter McGauran, to present its *One Basin, One Plan* assistance package directly to the banks. SAMI director, Tim Whetstone, said that if the banks supported the plan, many irrigators might have access to the new loans scheme to lease water before summer arrives. Mr Whetstone said the *One Basin, One Plan* proposal was designed to assist growers who wish to lease or sell water. It is intended to complement existing EC measures. "We are not looking for a rescue package that takes months to roll out," he said. "This plan won't suit everyone's water crisis. "But it will give irrigators a more realistic financing option if they want to lease or buy more water to keep plantings alive. "We would like to see the SA Government, or the Federal Government, buy water for its irrigators. "But the political reality is that they won't even discuss such a proposal. "So, in the short term, we must give our irrigators some means by which to purchase more water. "We believe that low-interest, long-term loans will be our most achievable solution." SOURCE: Extract from full report in the *Stock Journal*, SA, October 18.

Adelaide Advertiser

Butter prices to soar \$40c

The price of butter is expected to increase by as much as 40 per cent in South Australia over the next six months because of a nationwide shortage, distributors have warned. In the past three weeks, SA manufacturers have been told by suppliers to expect the shortfall to worsen as milk production decreases because of the drought. Swiss Glory, which makes products including chocolates, cakes, and pastries at Stepney, this week received less than half the amount of butter it usually does. Owner Elsbeth Wass said the business was "trying to balance" the shortage with production targets. "Normally, we'd get between 150kg and 200kg each week but this week we're only getting in 75kg and we can't get any more," she said. "We've been told the situation could get worse and we are acutely aware of the lack of rain and it is making a tough time for everyone." Ms Wass paid up to 50 per cent more for butter this week than she did last month. PDF Food Services general manager in Adelaide Vic DeCasto said much of the milk powder, which is produced from fresh milk, was being sold on the international market for a premium price. "This is driving up the price of everything and the price of cream alone has gone up 40 per cent in the past six to eight months," she said. Patisserie For All owner Brenda Damen has not been able to source butter from her supplier for three weeks and has had to buy unsalted butter from a supermarket.

Major parties 'failures' on green issues

The major political parties have been warned to "get cracking" if they want the environmental vote expected to be vital in a host of marginal seats. Peak environment body, the Australian Conservation Foundation, in the first of a series of progress scorecards during the campaign, has put the Opposition ahead of the Coalition on climate change and environment policies (49-21) but still below 50 per cent. The Australian Greens gained the highest score of 93 per cent, the Australian Democrats was on 90 and Family First was second worst with 31 per cent. Environment and climate change have been predicted as major vote-changing issues and recently the National Seniors lobby group said the environment was one of the "hot, vote-changing issues" for over-50s in marginal electorates. The scorecard was released after a new poll which showed 39 per cent of voter's thought Labor would handle environmental issues better than the Coalition on 25 per cent. The poll also showed voters rating the environment as more significant than the economy. ACF executive director Don Henry said while Labor had committed to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and the Coalition had not, in total the major parties "were failing on climate change and the environment". "To date, Australians are hearing far too much talk and are seeing far too little action on climate change from the major parties," he said. "Modest or weak climate change policies, a poor performance on forests and a lack of action on water and sustainable cities means both major parties have low scores," he said. The foundation is calling on the major parties to:

RATIFY the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions.

LEGISLATE to boost clean, safe, renewable energy.

RULE out the use of dangerous, toxic nuclear reactors and selling uranium to the region.

Mr Henry said while the Democrats and Greens were rating well in the ACF scorecard, it was natural most of the public's scrutiny was on the parties which would form government. "To start the transition to a better, more sustainable future, all political candidates and parties need to commit to binding targets to cut emissions, they should legislate to massively boost the amount of electricity sourced from clean, safe, renewable energy and they should immediately ratify the Kyoto Protocol," he said. Under a five-star grading system, the Coalition was given zero stars for the categories of setting greenhouse targets, showing international leadership on climate change and rejecting the nuclear industry. The Coalition's best score was 2 1/2 stars for making polluters pay and securing water supplies. Labor scored four stars for its Kyoto commitment and three stars in four other categories. Despite committing to cut emissions by 60 per cent by 2050, the ACF gave Labor only one star for setting the target at 2000 levels instead of 1990. The ACF described the Coalition's clean energy target of about 15 per cent of power generated by 2020 as weak and gave it one star.

Hybrid car of the future

A search for alternative fuels has led a group of Adelaide University students to build what they believe may become the car of the future. Chemical engineering student Tim Kenefick said the team's working model, one tenth the size of a normal car, was a hydrogen fuel cell hybrid vehicle that could be the "next generation" of green motoring technologies. The remote-controlled car is hooked up to a hydrogen fuel cell and has access to electric power stored in rechargeable batteries, much like existing vehicles such as the Honda SCX and Toyota FCHV. But hydrogen storage has presented a challenge to carmakers and the university team get around this by storing the gas in solid form in a metal hydride vessel, instead of a compressed-gas tank. "Toyota and Honda are putting the money into concept vehicles and working vehicles," Mr Kenefick said. "BP and Shell have set up hydrogen fuelling stations around the world. "If I was given the chance, with sponsorship or backing to work on scaling this up, I would jump on it. "It's the basis for the next generation of vehicles." It is now hoped that the university's work in developing solar energy technologies could be combined with the hybrid car concept.

The prototype was just one of the 40 projects on display at an exhibition sponsored by Santos and the Australian Institute of Energy. Professor Keith King, head of the school of chemical engineering, said the talent on display and the potential implications of the projects were outstanding. The event also brought students into close contact with members of industry and government, "some of whom have already become new employers of these students". School students can explore another form of renewable energy with the Solar Energy Lab and teaching resource by The Advertiser's Newspapers in Education department. TAFE SA is the sole sponsor of the solar collectable kit as part of an ongoing commitment to education in electronics, science and maths.

19th

The Australian

Greens to audit every home

The Greens have unveiled a \$22 billion plan to improve the energy efficiency of every Australian home. Under the scheme, every home would be subject to an energy audit and then retrofitted with energy-saving devices, including solar hot water systems, insulation and low-flow shower heads. The government would cover the up-front cost, but then collect payments from home owners over a 10-year period, ensuring the repayments were never as much as the savings on energy bills. Greens Tasmanian senator Christine Milne, campaigning in Adelaide today, said in that way no householder would be out of pocket. "What we need is a real focus on renewable energy and energy efficiency," Senator Milne said. "The problem is every time people talk about the increasing demand for energy, their response is let's build a new coal-fired power station." Senator Milne said current schemes to encourage energy efficiency only offered ad-hoc or peripheral rebates that had little impact. "The Greens are saying Australia's 7.4 million homes need to be retrofitted to be energy efficient," she said. "That means every home should at least have solar hot water and full insulation. "Let's invest \$22 billion of the surplus in retrofitting the housing stock of the nation. "We don't want to see infrastructure of the kind we're talking about - \$22 billion - frittered away in tax cuts. "We have got to change the way we think about energy and fuel." Senator Milne said the Greens' strategy would also help low income earners, traditionally the group least able to afford making the changes, invest in energy efficiencies. She said it would also provide for thousands of new jobs, including people trained to be energy auditors and those required to complete the installations across the country.

Garrett wants to heritage list gardens

Adelaide's Botanic Gardens could become the first inner-city public gardens in Australia to be heritage listed. Opposition environment spokesman Peter Garrett visited the 150-year-old gardens today and said a federal Labor government would fast-track consideration of national heritage listing. He said a Labor government would move quickly to put the issue before the Australian Heritage Council and would then act immediately on its recommendation. "With over 4,000 species of exotic and native plants, the botanic gardens deserves to be considered for Australia's highest level of heritage recognition," Mr Garrett said. "The botanic gardens really are very, very special." The environment spokesman said the proposed listing was also evidence of Labor's new leadership on heritage protection. "Our national heritage makes us what we are and tells our national story," he said. "From our indigenous cultural heritage through to our breathtaking natural icons, Australians want their heritage protected, respected and accessible." Mr Garrett said the federal government had been "asleep at the wheel" on heritage matters.

Brisbane 'will be part of tropics'

A projected temperature rise in southern Queensland that would effectively make the region part of the tropics could spell disaster for its grain industry, researchers suggest. However, the tropical conditions could also provide an opportunity to expand the sugar cane and ethanol fuel industries, Queensland University of Technology's Peter Grace said today. Professor Grace, the director of QUT's Institute of Sustainable Resources, has recently been working with climate change expert Peter Jamieson, from the New Zealand Institute of Crop and Food Research. Dr Jamieson will tomorrow speak at a forum in Brisbane about his research into climate change across the southern hemisphere and its effect on food production. "The climate forecast that Dr Jamieson has been looking at in New Zealand and across most of the southern hemisphere would be a shift of potentially anywhere between two and four degrees in climate," Professor Grace said. "So it is like moving Brisbane up into the tropics." Professor Grace has previously warned rising temperatures and declining rainfall could wipe \$1 billion a year off Australia's wheat industry within 30 years. Dr Jamieson's predictions of more severe storm activity in southern regions have persuaded Professor Grace to add flooding to the potential threats to grain growers. "You could have increased flooding in lower areas wiping out entire industries," he said. "I'm not trying to be alarmist at all, I'm just trying to say these are the things we need to be adapting to now, and we have start thinking now and not tomorrow." However, a possible benefit of a tropical climate in Queensland's south is the opportunity to expand the sugar cane industry, Professor Grace said. "There's always a lot of talk about reviving the cane industry and ethanol, and if the government got itself into gear and realised the great potential they have ... we could really have a gold mine on our hands, particularly on the coast and farmers

could move in that direction," he said. Southern Queensland's grain farmers need to start work now on soil conservation and water management to combat the effects of climate change, Professor Grace said.

Aussies lagging on green power uptake

Most Australians are willing to pay more for green energy, but their enthusiasm for clean power is outstripped by citizens of large developing countries. A global poll found 88 per cent of Australians were willing to switch to an environmentally friendly energy provider and a majority would be prepared to pay 10 per cent extra. The Accenture poll was conducted online in July and August with about 7500 people worldwide, including 500 Australians. Fifty-six per cent would be prepared to change providers if clean energy was not available. This was just above the global average but well below the 76 per cent of Brazilians who would take the same action. Only 34 per cent of Americans shared the same sentiment. Ninety-seven per cent of consumers surveyed in Brazil, China and India - all rapidly growing greenhouse gas emitters - said they were concerned about climate change and 98 per cent thought it would directly affect their lives. "Australian consumers were found to be adopting a new mindset that will change the way they make buying decisions, both now and in the future," Accenture Asia Pacific managing director resources Druvaan Von Drehnen said. "They said they expect energy companies to be clearer, more transparent and more frequent in letting consumers know what actions they're taking to address climate change." The survey also found 65 per cent of Australians wanted decisive government action on the issue by 2010. Another poll found 54 per cent of Australian businesses do not have a formal energy policy. The Proudfoot Consulting study on big companies, based on 102 responses, also learned 66 per cent have no published energy improvement goals.

Adelaide Advertiser

Drought forces cull of 2000 dairy cattle

South Australia's 350 dairy farmers have been forced to cull their milking herds by more than 2000 because of the drought. Water shortages and high grain prices forced the move. The state's herd is down from 7560 last year to 5550. The State Government's lead agricultural agency, Primary Industries and Resources, estimates that will drop to 4350 by next winter. Dairyfarmers Association of SA chief executive Ken Lyons said milk production was down about eight per cent on this time last year. Farmers, however, were getting "the best prices they've ever had" because world stocks of milk are low and high international prices have flowed to the farm gate. "While the drought has turned badly on us, the industry is confident it can bounce back and remain profitable," he said. PIRSA food and wine executive director Don Plowman warned Riverland councils to brace for major irrigated industry losses. He predicted the value of crops this year would be down almost \$400 million from \$551 million in 2005-06. That is based on a 20 per cent water allocation to irrigators. The Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation said the major issue facing SA was River Murray salinity. Spokesman Jarrod Eaton, however, signalled the threat of algal blooms was increasing. Water Minister Karlene Maywald admitted it would take SA a decade to recover from the drought. "There will be enormous fall-out in regional communities," she said. She revealed state and local government were close to signing a Memorandum of Understanding on water use if the drought continues.

20 years of water cuts

Water users in the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges face reduced allocations in the next 20 years. The CSIRO predicts up to half as much water could be available in its second report released yesterday. Eventually, 18 reports will be published on water availability in regions of the Murray-Darling basin. The Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges includes the major towns of Murray Bridge, Mannum, Strathalbyn and Mount Barker, and is one of the fastest-growing regions in Australia. The report found surface water availability in the River Murray and rivers Bremer, Angas, Finnis and Marne would fall from 120 gigalitres a year to 92 gigalitres a year at best, if current trends continued. Rainfall recharge to groundwater would reduce from 62 gigalitres a year to 50 gigalitres a year. The worst-case scenario would lead to water availability reducing by 52 per cent. Future development of forestry and farm dams could reduce surface water by a further four gigalitres a year and groundwater extraction could increase by 11 gigalitres as supplies dwindle. CSIRO Water for a Healthy Country director Dr Tom Hatton said those in the region could expect future weather patterns to be similar to the dry conditions felt over the past 10 years. "Any average year won't be worse than we went through in the past 10 years," he said. "It's a relatively densely populated part of the basin, there's 50,000 people there and most of the enterprise is based around these water resources." Sustainable yields project manager Dr Bill Young said rainfall was expected to reduce by seven per cent. "If you look within the region, there's more groundwater use than surface water use so it is a more important resource," he said. River Murray Minister Karlene Maywald said the report would help future planning for sustainable water use in the region. "There are signs that if the taking of water is allowed to continue unregulated, over the long-term the available water will no longer be sufficient to meet the requirements of domestic water users, the environment, irrigation, stock and other commercial use," she said. Macclesfield farmer Ken Smith, 65, who has farmed the region for 50 years, said he was used to the changing

nature of the weather. "We have had dry years before, probably not quite like the last couple, we have seen it come and go and I think we'll get wet years again too," he said.

Pipeline failure leaves city dry

It's called vulnerability – the driest State in Australia relying on a water supply that is failing

Six Port Augusta schools were shut down yesterday and up to 10,000 people were without water for hours, after the Morgan to Whyalla pipeline burst in four places on Wednesday night. Yesterday, SA Water crews were working to repair the damage, which was believed to be result of a pressure reduction valve malfunction. Repair crews were last night not expecting to complete their work until midnight. SA Water chief operating officer John Ringham estimated between 8000 and 10,000 people in the eastern side of Port Augusta had been affected. "We have spoken with two high schools and four primary schools, all of which have sent their students home for the day," he said. "SA Water has co-ordinated delivery of water to two primary schools in Port Augusta, where staff were continuing work on site for the day. "We have tankered water to both of these sites to use primarily for toilet flushing. "Early this morning, we sent two tankers of water to the local hospital for use on dialysis, and also supplied them with 300 bottles of drinking water." SA Water customers who have had to buy drinking water will be reimbursed on presentation of receipts. Water restrictions will be eased for the eastern side of Port Augusta and Stirling North this weekend. Drippers, hand-held hoses, watering cans and buckets will be allowed at even-numbered houses all day tomorrow and odd-numbered houses all day Sunday. "It is necessary to bleed air from the system and this means releasing a certain amount of water," Mr Ringham said. "We recognise this is not ideal given the current drought, and so we are looking at ways where . . . residents can use some of the water instead."

Diesel best, says Holden

Car manufacturer and World Solar Challenge supporter GM Holden says diesel is best for typical Australian motoring. GM and its Australian arm, GM Holden, however, have given technological and financial support to challenge entrants as part of the car maker's interest in potential future fuel needs and energy efficiencies, which mean lower carbon dioxide emissions. The Panasonic World Solar Challenge begins in Darwin on Sunday on its 3021km-run south across the Outback to Adelaide. The GM-backed entrants include a petrol-electric hybrid car, sun-powered solar cars and a production car running on fuel that is 85 per cent ethanol - a renewable energy resource. GM Holden director of innovation engineering Richard Marshall said although the company was committed to alternative propulsion breakthroughs, diesel fuel now was the best solution for typical Australian driving needs. "We think drivers will begin to understand and choose the alternative powertrain solution that suits their transport needs," he said. "Where drivers spend most of their time in heavily-congested traffic, petrol hybrids may offer the appropriate level of performance with low fuel consumption. "For people whose driving habits typically include a mix of inner city, suburban and country driving, diesel vehicles may be more likely to deliver powerful performance and better fuel economy. "In Australia, most driving falls into this latter category where relatively low-density residential suburbs, rapidly-spreading coastal fringes and long distances between rural population centres are generally more suitable for diesel power trains." Mr Marshall's assessment is all the more interesting because no hybrid or diesel car is made in Australia. GM Holden is experimenting with a diesel Commodore but says at \$50 million to develop, plus tooling costs, it is too costly to put into production yet. A hybrid Commodore would be priced too high to attract buyers - unless government incentives and subsidies were given. GM Holden spokesman John Lindsay said the company offered diesel engines in imported models, the Astra small car, Captiva SUV and Rodeo ute. The government's greenvehicleguide website rates the Astra diesel fuel use at just 5.9 litres/100km which is 20 per cent more frugal than the petrol Astra's 7.4 litres/100km. The diesel Captiva is rated at 8.6l/100km, or 25 per cent more economic than the petrol Captiva's 11.5l/100km.

Environment policies fail the test

The Australian Conservation Foundation says major political parties are failing to deliver satisfactory environmental policies in the lead-up to the November 24 federal election. While praising the environmental approaches of the Greens and the Democrats, the ACF gave the Coalition policies a ranking of only 21 out of 100, while Labor received 49 out of 100. This obviously reflects deficiencies in the policies so far outlined by the major parties. But it is easy for minor parties, which will never have the responsibility of implementing their policies, to draft extravagant plans to save the planet. Never mind the cost, never mind the impact on the world economy or international productivity, never mind the hardship such policies would create, particularly in fragile economies. Having said that, ACF executive director Don Henry is performing a useful function in analysing environmental policy. The major parties have a responsibility to lay down detailed and transparent plans on how they will tackle issues like global warming and climate change. Australian voters have a right to know which party is striking the right balance between environmental protection and a responsible approach to the potential economic impacts of excessive zeal. The ACF puts Labor ahead of the Coalition in each of 10 categories it has identified. But this election is about the economy as well as the environment.

The ACF gives no indication of the potential economic impact of the policies.

FarmOnLine

Vic water prices shoot to \$1,000/megalitre

Water prices rose to \$1,000 a megalitre on both the Goulburn and the Murray in Victoria this week. Brokers report buyers prepared to pay \$1,100/ML for water, which only a few years back, traded at around \$50/ML. Irrigators bought 440ML of Murray water downstream of Barmah and 1700ML of Goulburn water on the Goulburn Murray Water-run Watermove for \$1000/ML and paid \$907.50/ML for 208ML of Murray water between Dartmouth and Barmah. Goulburn Murray Water (GMW) increased seasonal allocations on the Goulburn from 23-26pc and extended the season to its traditional finish day of May 15. It also increased Murray allocations from 16 to 18pc and those on the Broken from 15 to 18pc. Campaspe allocations were lifted to 2pc and the Loddon was unchanged at 5pc. But GMW warned ongoing dry conditions meant the outlook for future allocations was very bleak, with the most optimistic outlook for mid February allocations just 43pc on the Goulburn and a bare 27pc on the Murray. SOURCE: *Stock & Land*, Vic, October 18.

20th

Adelaide Advertiser

Rebates urged for green projects

Councils need to support green developments by cutting their rates in line with the level of "green-ness", a property industry lobby group says. The Property Council's Green Building Initiatives policy, released yesterday, calls for a sliding scale of rate reductions with priority given to green developments. Executive director Nathan Paine said Adelaide's new green developments had received their share of incentives but there were no incentives for refurbished green projects. "Currently, the property sector is delivering new green developments without any assistance from local government despite councils receiving the social, urban and significant financial windfall benefits associated with the developments," he said. "The baton has now been passed from new buildings to existing buildings and the Property Council is calling on local government to introduce an incentive scheme that will encourage owners of existing building stock to undertake green refurbishments." In a sliding scale, a five-star building, such as the \$143 million City Central Tower 1, would receive a 20 per cent reduction on its rates. A six-star building would receive a 40 per cent reduction. Developers also would receive scaled rebates on development application fees under the policy. Adelaide Lord Mayor Michael Harbison said changes to development guidelines would be a more effective way of promoting green developments than offering discounted rates. "We have given a massive increase in height allowances, with the trade-off being a requirement for green buildings," he said. "This has increased the development capacity by \$6 billion in the city. "We are happy to look at (the Property Council's policy) but I think there are other things that can be done." The Property Council said increased height allowances only targeted new buildings and ignored the refurbishment market. "The aim is not new buildings, it is about existing buildings," Mr Paine said. Adelaide City Council last year raised \$55.9 million in general rates and \$519,000 in development fees.

Storm run-off fit to drink

Stormwater from streets of Adelaide's northern suburbs is being turned into water suitable for drinking in a world-first project. The Aquifer Storage Transfer and Recovery project, involving Salisbury Council, United Water and CSIRO, takes stormwater runoff and injects it into a deep underground aquifer at Parafield Airport. Since the project began in September, 2006, 140 million litres of water - equal to one-quarter of Adelaide's daily consumption - has passed through wetlands into the aquifer 165m below the surface. Tests in the past three months have found the water is fit for human consumption. Salisbury Council city projects director Colin Pitman said the initial health assessments had proved the technique, which used natural water flows and biological treatments, worked. "It will be able to provide a portion of Adelaide's water supply," he said. "It needs to go the whole research time to demonstrate that the results are not just an initial good performance - it needs to perform for the long term." Local contractor Danny Tallboy, 47, said the water tasted better than tap water. "I . . . would have no problems if this was what came out of the tap," he said. The project will continue for another three years before the water can be considered for supplementing Adelaide's water supply.

Solar challenge lights up career

Biobike team leader Heidi McNamara, from the University of Adelaide, is no stranger to the World Solar Challenge which starts tomorrow in Darwin. She took part in 2001 as a high school student from Annesley College. Now she is studying mechanical engineering. "That was the main reason I wanted to do engineering, because I went with my school," she said. "I didn't really have any expectations about engineering but I hoped that some day it would get me back in the World Solar Challenge - and look at me now!" The BioBike Project Team last year designed, manufactured and tested Australia's first biodiesel motorbike. Ms McNamara says this year's model has higher power output and greater fuel efficiency. The bike complies with Australian Design Rules.

If all goes to plan, the team of seven mechanical engineering students will be back in Adelaide today week. The bike will be on display in Victoria Square this weekend, with all of the other entries in the challenge. Solar cars are expected to cross the finish line in the heart of the square as early as Thursday afternoon. Australia's sole entrant in the elite Challenge Class for new cars is the Aurora Challenge. Students in South Australian schools will be watching with interest as they build their own solar projects. The Solar Energy Lab from News in Education in The Advertiser is sponsored by TAFE SA. This is part of a commitment to electronics, maths and science education.

We can't go it alone on climate - ANSTO

Australia can do nothing on its own to reduce the environmental effects of climate change, a leading nuclear scientist says. The opinion of Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) chairman and former Telstra chief Ziggy Switkowski flies in the face of community campaigns which say 'we can all do our bit to combat climate change'. Dr Switkowski told the Australian Nuclear Association conference in Sydney today that while nuclear was the inevitable way to meet Australia's increasing baseload energy requirements and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the immediate priority must be to find cleaner ways to burn coal. He said Australia's greenhouse gases were already "locked in" for the next generation, partly because the nation had moved at such a slow rate on nuclear development and acceptance. "Greenhouse gas emissions that we can expect is programmed in for the next 20 or 30 years," he said. "We can do heroic things, even arguably turn our economy on its head, turn our lifestyle inside-out and then say to our grandchildren: 'We did everything we could, but nothing changed,' unless the big international economies embark upon strategies that reduce emissions." He denied Australia could make a greater contribution to combat climate change by reducing coal exports. "Global use of coal is 5.5 billion tonnes and Australia exports about 300 million (tonnes), so ... Australia as a coal exporter contributes a comparatively small proportion," Dr Switkowski said. "The most important thing is to find ways to burn coal more cleanly and capture the combustion products and store them and then to make that technology available to the large economies around the world. "When a country is confronted by a problem such as crime, drug abuse, poverty ... the application of budget resources can get on top of the local problem in the main. "Climate change or global warming is not of that kind. "The sum total of what we can do in Australia may well eliminate emissions in this country (but) have no material impact on our climate simply because ... unless our steps are mirrored around the world ... nothing we can do collectively in Australia, unless it has an international consequence, can change climate change." Dr Switkowski said there was a reluctance by the Labor Party to commit to a nuclear energy future in Australia and under a federal Labor government the nuclear industry might be further delayed. "I don't believe there is any path forward that will get us there without substantially investing in nuclear power and really it's just a matter of time before all the parties come to that conclusion," he said.

Courier Mail

Premier's water skills for sale

Premier Anna Bligh is so chuffed with her handling of the water crisis she plans to sell the Government's vast intellectual property on the issue to the world. As southeast Queenslanders continue to endure the most draconian water restrictions in Australia, Ms Bligh has revealed her "know-how" on water management is going global with Smart Water, a liquefied spin-off of the Smart State brand. Ms Bligh said the venture would create "a major new export industry" and become the focus of overseas trade missions usually reserved to promote multibillion-dollar industries such as mining. "Queensland is a world leader in water management," she said. But the plan, which combines government and business expertise with the research power of universities, comes despite constant criticism that poor infrastructure planning has resulted in a race to finish the \$9 billion water grid before dams run dry. Opposition Leader Jeff Seeney said he was highly amused at the Smart Water concept. "They won't even get enough money to buy a bottle of water for their experience," he said. "There is no greater indicator of failure of this Government in terms of delivering infrastructure and they are going to bundle the expertise that was responsible for that and sell it on the world market." The Government has been regularly found wanting on water, including ignoring a 2001 blueprint for shielding southeast Queensland from the current water crisis. Home water rebates are suffering massive backlogs, councils have been sparring over restrictions and towns near Gympie's Traveston Crossing Dam proposal were found to have been not consulted properly. The Western Corridor Recycling Project west of Brisbane, where only 130ML of waste water will be pumped each day, was supposed to pump 230ML a day. Costs also have blown out. But Ms Bligh said the water grid had captured both national and international attention. "The figures are amazing: a record \$9 billion of expenditure, more than 3000 workers working on our water grid and a staggering three million hours of employment on this project," she said. "We must capitalise on the world-class knowledge and expertise that has underpinned the planning, the design and the construction of our water grid."

\$24 million offerd to save water

Financial incentives totalling \$24 million will be available to South Australians who become more water efficient inside and outside the home from next month, the State Government announced today. The incentives are aimed at saving more than five billion litres of water a year by 2010. The package of rebates includes up to \$30 for installing low flow showerheads, up to \$110 for completing a home water audit, \$50 rebate when people spend \$150 on water efficient gardening products, up to \$200 when they buy a minimum four-star energy rated washing machine, and up to \$150 when older toilets are replaced with dual flush systems. "Under our Water Proofing Adelaide strategy, we set a target of saving more than 11 billion litres of indoor household water a year by 2025," Premier Mike Rann said. "This rebates package is designed to accelerate this saving. "The community has made a huge effort to reduce water consumption during the current drought and we hope to encourage ongoing water savings through this scheme." Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald said the information campaign would be launched shortly in preparation for the start of the scheme on November 1. "Installing a low-flow showerhead may seem like a small action but about 16,000 litres of water can be saved per household each year," she said. "This package could save 1.6 billion litres of household water annually."

Warming fears grow as oceans soak up less CO2

The world's oceans appear to be soaking up less carbon dioxide, new environmental research has shown, a development that could speed up global warming. A 10-year study by researchers from the University of East Anglia has shown that the uptake of CO₂ by the North Atlantic ocean halved between the mid-1990s and 2002-2005. "Such large changes are a tremendous surprise," said Dr Ute Schuster, who will publish the findings with professor Andrew Watson in the *Journal of Geophysical Research* next month. "We expected that the uptake would change only slowly because of the ocean's great mass." There is also evidence of a slowdown in the uptake of CO₂ by the Southern ocean, although it is not as great or as sudden as in the North Atlantic. The scientists based their findings on data collected by merchant ships fitted out with equipment to automatically measure the levels of carbon dioxide in the water. One ship that sailed between Britain and the West Indies made more than 90,000 measurements in recent years. The oceans are one of two major carbon "sinks" for CO₂ emissions, the other being the land biosphere, which together absorb about half of all CO₂ emitted into the atmosphere. If the oceans soak up less CO₂, it means CO₂ levels in the atmosphere will rise much faster and the climate could warm more rapidly, the researchers said. "The speed and size of the change show that we cannot take for granted the ocean sink for the carbon dioxide," said Prof Watson. "Perhaps this is partly a natural oscillation or perhaps it is a response to the recent rapid climate warming. "In either case we now know that the sink can change quickly and we need to continue to monitor the ocean uptake."

Global warming a red-hot issue

At the end of the first week of the election campaign, Media Monitors reports that climate change is the second most mentioned issue. In the lull before the storm, the Coalition and Labor are readying for a climate and water onslaught. In the past year, voters have witnessed the most radical parade of environmental policy in memory. About \$27 billion has been allocated by state and federal governments on new water infrastructure. Australia will be the first country to implement a comprehensive emissions trading scheme from about 2011. There's more. Prime Minister John Howard this week flagged new plans on a climate change policy that "balances our obligation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with the need to keep our economy growing". Like most election announcements, the details remain closely guarded. It seems likely that ratifying Kyoto will not be among them. It had been suggested Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull has been lobbying for a symbolic about-face on ratification of Kyoto. This rumour was crushed by Howard on Monday. "The reason I won't ratify the Kyoto treaty is: the existing Kyoto treaty doesn't cover countries like China, and we could be at a competitive disadvantage," he told Southern Cross Radio. Kyoto remains the symbolic divide between the two parties. It has been Labor's main point of differentiation for most of the decade. Global negotiations are focused now on a more substantive deal after 2012 and Australia is likely to meet its modest targets. Newspoll has climate change at the same level as the economy in voter importance. Newspoll chief executive Martin O'Shannessy believes the window of opportunity for the Government to credibly reverse its Kyoto position passed earlier in the year. "If they had gone to it early and taken a leadership position, then yes, but dragged to it in the context of a campaign it would probably be viewed cynically," O'Shannessy tells Inquirer. "What they need to do would be to come up with their own policy, rather than something that has already had its day. "The more likely thing for the Government to do is to play to its strengths. It may not profit them to start talking about climate change because they won't have time to sell the idea." Details of the Coalition's election commitments are expected to remain faithful to the core climate change strategy of committing funds to development. A solar project is rumoured to be top of the list. During the NSW state election campaign, the state Coalition supported the

development of Australia's first solar baseload power station in the "solar triangle" between Broken Hill, Moree and Dubbo. This included \$40 million to kick-start construction and infrastructure to connect to the national grid. There is a radical proposal for a \$2 billion wind farm near Broken Hill and Australia's main geothermal projects are located near the Cooper Basin. It will cost about \$1 million for every kilometre to run high-voltage lines to connect these energy sources to the grid. The Howard Government is expected to extend research funding into clean coal by \$200 million over 10 years. There are also opportunities for the Government in research and development funding for new technologies, including energy efficiency, and a policy announcement on water management as a key abatement strategy to climate change is likely. While the Government has been playing catch-up this year to minimise the gap on climate policy, Labor has been keen to ensure it does not surrender its political advantage. After his set-piece climate change summit in March, Labor leader Kevin Rudd hired climate expert Alex Gordon, who has been shaping the party's climate-change plan. The underlying strategy is to ensure Labor remains ahead of the Government on most important opportunities. It has retained some key blueprints to fire during the campaign, topped by its long-awaited increase of the mandatory renewable energy target, expected to be 20 per cent. Aside from Kyoto, Labor has already committed to a national standard for carbon offsets to ensure consumer confidence, offered rebates and low-interest loans for insulation, solar energy and hot water, and minimum standards for appliances, including plasma television sets.

Adelaide.now.com

Cash rebates for saving water

South Australians will finally be offered significant household water saving rebates in line with other mainland Australian states. The State Government yesterday announced it would help fund a number of initiatives, including water-saving gardening appliances, toilets and washing machines, effective from the start of next month. From January, it will also provide \$100 towards household water audits. Mr Rann said the \$24 million plan would save 5 billion litres of water each year. "The community has made a huge effort to reduce water consumption during the current drought and we hope to encourage ongoing water savings through this scheme," he said. In January, The Advertiser reported South Australians were being offered the lowest incentives to install water saving devices. In March, it was revealed a number of measures were being considered by SA Water which yesterday led to calls the Government had unnecessarily delayed its decision. Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith said the measures could have been introduced two years ago. "These measures sound like they are going to be helpful, I think incentives rather than restrictions make more sense," he said. "These measures could have been announced a year or two years ago when we knew we were heading into a very difficult period for water and the drought." The measures announced by the Government most closely reflect rebates offered in Queensland, although every other mainland state already has a comprehensive rebate scheme. Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald said the Government had based its system on successful components of other schemes. Greens MLC Mark Parnell said the Government must now focus on reducing industry water use. "Householders should do their bit, but so too should manufacturing," he said. Adelaide University Professor Mike Young said the Government must restructure pricing to achieve significant household savings.

FarmOnLine

New adviser on drought

The South Australia Government has appointed former premier, Dean Brown, as the premier's special adviser on drought. Mr Brown will have direct access to SA Premier, Mike Rann, and his and my high-level drought taskforce. "He will personally brief Cabinet, and he will report to the Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Water on drought related matters," Mr Rann said. "As the special adviser on drought, Dean Brown will work to identify and coordinate State-wide responses – hand-in-hand with our regional drought coordinators and through State-wide drought forums. "The appointment of a special adviser with direct access to decision makers, has proven very effective in dealing with major crises, such as the Eyre Peninsula bushfire and Virginia floods. "People told me they wanted a single point of access where they could get things done quickly and effectively and the bushfire recovery is now held up as a national benchmark in crisis response. "Dean Brown will work in the same way, with banks, industry organisations and community service providers on the business, social and natural resource management impacts of drought to help us identify and efficiently target our drought response measures." SOURCE: *Stock Journal, SA*.

VFF want drought relief gaps filled

The Victorian Farmers Federation wants its State Government to "fill the gaps" in the measures assisting farmers and rural business deal with drought. VFF leaders have this week met with Victorian Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Water and Minister for Regional Development pushing for more State drought relief. VFF deputy president, Meg Parkinson, said the Premier had to meet the commitment he made to fill the gaps in drought support measures being provided by the Federal Government.

"After speaking with the Premier and his ministers this morning we are calling on him and his Government to honour the commitment of additional State drought support measures for farmers," Ms Parkinson said. "The criteria for the Federal Government support packages announced by the Prime Minister in September have now been clarified and the VFF has provided a detailed submission on the areas where the State Government should be placing additional resources." Ms Parkinson said the VFF had identified a number of measures ranging from a case management approach to easing the transition for those farmers choosing to exit agriculture, to the provision of grants to assist farmers to retain the productive capacity of their farms. "Other measures listed include support for fodder and agistment transport, water rate rebates where Federal grants do not apply, shire rate rebates, and funding for the pumping of the Waranga basin. "While an exit strategy is important to help those farmers who need to leave the industry, support to keep farmers producing our food is even more important," Ms Parkinson said. "If Victorians want to see an end to drought inflated food prices and the risk of a serious food shortage than support that assists farmers to get back on their feet is essential." SOURCE: VFF and *FarmOnline*.

Citrus industry to embrace change with a restructure

The steps to restructure Australia's citrus industry have begun with a series of regional road shows. This week, the industry's peak body, Australian Citrus Growers (ACG), will outline two possible structure options that could best service the industry. The move has the support of the industry's grower-funded bodies who in 2005 endorsed the need to change the existing structure. ACG president, Mark Chown, said it was clear to all parties along the citrus industry's supply chain that the structure of the current grower-funded bodies was "based on a traditional, agripolitical, regional representative model that is seen to be less relevant in these modern times". "Never has the industry met such a strong challenge for change from markets, production costs, export competitors and natural resources, as in these current tough times," Mr Chown said. Within the industry, growers currently support 13 citrus bodies through levies or voluntary contributions (this does not represent all citrus grower bodies), equating to one citrus body for every 160 growers. Mr Chown said obviously the timing of the industry's restructure had been challenged by the increasing water crisis as well as the upcoming Federal election. "It is vital we not only address the immediate issues but plan ahead for the benefit of not just the grower but the industry in general," he said. "Obviously once we have finished the road shows we will reconvene and discuss the next step." In 2008, levy payers will be asked to decide on the best possible, structural option to drive the Industry forward. SOURCE: Australian Citrus Growers and *The Land*, NSW.

News.com.au

Petrol prices on the rise

Retail fuel prices have risen for the first time in a month as tensions between Turkey and Kurdish separatists continue to strain the global oil price. Twelve Turkish soldiers were killed overnight when heavy fighting between Kurdish Marxist-Leninist separatists the PKK and the Turks erupted. Turkey is now seriously considering cross-border military operations to strike at PKK bases in the semi-autonomous Kurdish north of Iraq. The problem for the world's motorists is that northern Iraq is a vital oil producing region. Nationally, petrol rose by 0.7 cents a litre during the past week, figures from the Australian Institute of Petroleum show. The national average is now 124.4 cents a litre. Brisbane motorists are paying the least for a tank of petrol at \$1.12 a litre while motorists in Darwin are forking out \$1.31 for the most expensive petrol in any capital city. CommSec equities economist Martin Arnold, who last week predicted the price of petrol would rise, said he expected the price to continue heading north. "Global petroleum markets remain under pressure and prices are unlikely to ease much until there is some resolution to the stand-off in the Middle East involving Turkey and Iraq," Mr Arnold said in his weekly analysis. "Australian petrol prices will follow world prices higher in the coming weeks. "CommSec expects pump prices to rise by around 5.0 cents per litre in coming weeks." Mr Arnold's prediction comes despite oil prices ending lower on overnight markets. New York's key oil futures contract, light sweet crude for delivery in November, closed down 87 cents at \$US88.60 a barrel. But the contract had earlier surged to a record \$US90.07. That beat the previous high of \$US90.02 set late yesterday.

The Australian

Nuclear may not happen, says Turnbull

John Howard's proposal for nuclear power plants is starting to take a back seat with Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull saying they may never happen. Nuclear power is not a certainty in Australia, despite it being the cheapest and most tenable option, Mr Turnbull said today. Mr Turnbull told reporters in Sydney today more research into clean energy technologies may show nuclear is not the cheapest option and therefore that it may never be adopted. "If clean coal turns out to be a cheaper alternative then we may never have nuclear power in Australia," Mr Turnbull said. "It may be there is no nuclear power in Australia but ... we need to have nuclear power as an option. "My own feeling is it (nuclear) will be the most competitive in Australia." Mr Turnbull has previously said he believes electricity generation should have zero-emissions by 2050 and that target could be reached by using a combination of clean energy sources, including nuclear.

A report by a committee headed by nuclear physicist Ziggy Switkowski suggests nuclear power may be the answer to supplying the nation's growing base load energy demands. The Switkowski committee suggested that up to 25 nuclear power stations could be built along the east coast. Mr Turnbull repeated government assurances that the operation of such nuclear plants was at least 10 to 15 years away.

'I would cross floor': Nat

A Nationals candidate says she would cross the floor if John Howard wanted to build a nuclear power plant in northern NSW. Sue Page, who is contesting the marginal Labor-held seat of Richmond on the NSW north coast, said the Nationals was the only choice for her because she could speak her mind without fear of being disendorsed. Dr Page, a former president of the Rural Doctors' Association, said she was willing to cross the floor of parliament to stand up for her community. That included the issue of a nuclear power plant. Dr Page said the majority of people in Richmond did not want a nuclear power plant in the electorate. "The prime minister is not the leader of my party," she said. "My views and wishes are consistent with my party." In August, Ms Page released a statement guaranteeing there would be no nuclear power stations or waste-storage facilities in Richmond or anywhere else in Australia if the coalition was re-elected. The government's policy is to allow local communities a plebiscite on any plan to establish nuclear power stations in their area. Dr Page also is a supporter of harm-minimisation approaches, such as injecting rooms and needle exchanges, to tackling illicit drug use and admitted she prescribed methadone to some of her drug-addicted patients. Richmond was one of the few seats Labor picked up from the coalition at the 2004 federal election. Nationals leader Mark Vaile, visiting the electorate today, said his party was desperate to win back Richmond but acknowledged the influx of sea changers to the electorate had meant voters were more demanding of government services. Dr Page, who joined The Nationals at the end of last year, said she was approached by several political parties and people had since told her she should have joined The Greens. "Above all we (The Nationals) don't try and enforce party policy to change the candidate," Dr Page told reporters. "The candidate is expected to stand up for the community first and the party second."

Adelaide.now.com

PM's \$50m water pledge for SA

The Prime Minister has announced \$50m in funding for water initiatives - including money towards a desalination plant - to help South Australia tackle the drought. Speaking in Adelaide this afternoon, John Howard said the Coalition Government if re-elected would provide \$10m towards planning for the proposed desalination plant. Mr Howard also announced "appropriate capital" funding for the desalination plant when built but refused to detail how much that would be. The Government also would provide a further \$40m to more than double its contribution to the waterproofing northern Adelaide project, extending it into new development areas. "We need to secure a water supply for Adelaide that is independent of the River Murray," Mr Howard said. In a normal year Adelaide draws some 40 per cent of its water needs from the River Murray and Mr Howard said this was "impractical and unacceptable for a river system under stress".

Farmers fear \$28b disaster

Drought-hit farmers have rallied in Canberra to warn the Government's \$10 billion water plan will force up food prices and devastate the national economy. Many of the 200 farmers in the Parliament House protest are irrigators whose water allocations have been slashed under the national water plan. Federal Parliament passed laws in August that handed the Commonwealth control over water allocations for irrigators along the drought-stricken basin. The laws, which are backed by all Murray Basin states except Victoria, also provide for the establishment of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to manage water resources. Murray-Darling Water Crisis Management Council chairman Ken Trewin said the plan would induce a man-made disaster across the basin that would force up food prices long into the future. "Taking this water out of production will wipe \$28 billion off agriculture and associated industries, or 2.9 per cent off the economy," Mr Trewin said. He urged farmers to abstain from voting if the laws were upheld. "It's really important to get the message through to the treasurer of the day, irrespective of which political party that might be," Mr Trewin told the crowd. "The drought has reached unprecedented proportions and the social and economic impacts are beyond comprehension. "That's the message to get to these politicians and the federal members - if they don't listen, don't vote." Mildura district grape grower John Argaro said the Federal Government had failed to consult irrigators about the laws. He said if the Government did not listen to their concerns, farmers would have no option but to abstain from voting at the federal election. "We've got to (abstain from voting)," he said. "We'll go in and cross our name off the roll. "At the end of the day you cannot just push us aside and we'll go away, it's got to the point where something needs to be done straight away." Mr Argaro said irrigators in the Mildura district already had suffered a 35 per cent cut to their water allocations. He said by June next year farmers would have lost 60 per cent of their allocations. "Sixty per cent of the water gone, dead, going back to nature," he said. "If that's what they want then so be it, as long as they know they have killed a whole community."

FarmOnLine

Angry irrigators vow militance over water

Farmers have vowed to continually blockade Parliament House until the Government meets its demands to put a halt on permanent water trading and environmental water flows during the drought. About 200 angry farmers from the southern Murray Darling Basin made the long trip to Canberra to rally against the \$10 billion national plan for water security, which they say will cost the Australian economy more than \$28 billion from lost production and the flow-on consequences. Rally co-ordinator and mayor of Wakool shire, in southern NSW, Ken Trewin, said his crisis group will be hosting seminars throughout the Basin to get more farmers involved. He said the only way forward would be through political pressure. "We're not here because of the drought," Mr Trewin said. "We're here because unless Australian farmers become more militant, as the French farmers, there's going to be a mass exodus of farmers right across the whole Murray Darling basin. "We have a policy crisis. The Federal plan outlined by the PM, and supported by the Labor party, was rammed through Parliament in some four and a half hours. "That will remove between 3000 and 4500 gigalitres of irrigation water for environmental flows, some 29pc perhaps of all irrigation water." Mr Trewin said Australia's gross domestic product would be shattered if the plan goes ahead in its current format. "Food prices will go up, and the quality of food is going to deteriorate," he said. He said the MDB needs an emergency dam to hold water supplies for times of drought. SOURCE: Rural Press National News Service, Parliament House Bureau, Canberra.

Farmers protest Fed Govt Murray water buyback

Up to 600 farmers and business people from South Australia and Victoria will march on Parliament House in Canberra today in protest against the Coalition's plans for water buybacks in the Murray Darling Basin. Murray-Darling Basin Water Crisis Management Council chairman Ken Trewin said using \$3 billion to buy back water rights — from whom the Government described as non-viable or inefficient irrigators — could wipe \$28 billion off the economy. SOURCE: *The Age*, Melbourne, a Fairfax Media publication.

News.com.au

Wildfires force 250,000 to flee

Wind-whipped wildfires raged unchecked across California overnight, forcing the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people and besieging homes from Los Angeles to the Mexican border. At least 10 fires were blazing throughout southern California with thousands of firefighters struggling to contain flames that have ripped through tinder-try hillsides and parkland following months of record-low rainfalls. One person has been killed, more than 20 people injured and 34,000 hectares destroyed in the fires, which have reportedly forced the evacuation of 250,000 people in San Diego County alone. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who has declared a state of emergency in seven counties to help battle the fires, described the escalating crisis as a "tragedy" for the state. "It's a tragic time for California," Schwarzenegger said after touring charred remains of buildings in Malibu, west of Los Angeles, where fires which erupted early yesterday have wreaked havoc. As well as firefighters on the ground, authorities bombarded the blazes from above using helicopters and airplanes to drop water and flame retardant. Fire authorities admit they are struggling to control the fires and are grimly expecting the situation to worsen with powerful, hot desert winds expected to gust across the region. "These fires that are sweeping through Southern California are a perfect storm," said Los Angeles County supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky. "The fire department and law enforcement personnel have been stressed almost beyond the point of reason because there are so many fires going mutual aid has been stressed to their limits. This is a perfect firestorm. "The winds are erratic and unpredictable. There is no telling where the fires will move and when." Reports said authorities in San Diego County had ordered the evacuation of 250,000 people as the fires raced towards built-up residential areas. Among the evacuees were prison inmates and hospital patients, while several schools were also closed. In Malibu, strong winds fed the flames which destroyed a church and other buildings, forcing thousands to evacuate, including entire neighbourhoods. Homes of director James Cameron and Grease movie star Olivia Newton-John were among those evacuated, celebrity site TMZ.com reported. Thousands of students at Malibu's Pepperdine University were evacuated. Nearby, the Malibu Presbyterian Church and several private homes burned to the ground, and the coastal highway from Los Angeles to San Francisco was closed. The blaze also destroyed much of the Malibu Castle, known as Castle Kashan, a hilltop landmark and put up for sale in March for \$US17 million (\$19.2 million). The causes of the different fires raging throughout the state were varied, with a fallen power line believed to be the cause of the blaze in Malibu while arson was blamed for a fire in Orange County that torched 1620 hectares. "I'm sad to report this is an arson fire," said Orange County Fire Authority Chief Chip Prather.

One person was killed and four firefighters were seriously injured while trying to protect a home from fire in Potrero, 50 km east of San Diego, the fire department said. Seventeen people were injured. Overnight today the

fire had ripped through 8100 hectares of brush and was threatening 1500 structures as it raced to the Mexico border, a spokeswoman from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said.

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Officials warned the fires may continue for several days while the high winds keep up. "This fire's been very erratic and it has moved rapidly when it has moved with the winds," Los Angeles County fire chief Michael Freeman said. Many parts of California, including Los Angeles, have experienced record low rainfalls this year, leaving hundreds of thousands of acres of countryside at the mercy of wildfires. In 2003, California wildfires left at least 22 people dead, scorched 300,000 hectares and destroyed 3000 homes.

Adelaide Advertiser

Global warming worsens

Australian greenhouse gas reduction targets need to be substantially increased, as emissions grow at a much faster rate than predicted, the CSIRO warns. Researchers from the CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research Centre and environment group Global Carbon Project have analysed emissions data from 2006. They found global emissions had increased by 3 per cent each year this century, instead of 2 per cent each year as previously thought. This compared to a rate of 1 per cent each year in the 1990s. The rate at which carbon dioxide was being absorbed by oceans and land had also decreased in the past 50 years. The efficiency of the Southern Ocean in particular to absorb carbon dioxide had reduced by 30 per cent in the past 20 years. The analysis is published today in the U.S. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences journal. Australian co-author Dr Mike Raupach said the findings meant developed countries would have to lead by example and substantially increase their emission reduction targets. He said the target to reduce emissions by 60 per cent of 2000 levels by 2050 would have to be increased to up to 90 per cent. "The minimum global target is 60 per cent global emission reductions below 2000 levels by 2050 and developed nations, including Australia, have to reduce emissions by substantially more than this," he said. "The message from this picture is emissions are increasing and a lot faster than we thought they would, even a few years ago. Dr Raupach said oceans were "overwhelmed" by the amount of emissions in the atmosphere and were unable to soak up the carbon dioxide as fast as it was produced. Deforestation, heatwaves and drought had affected the amount of carbon land could absorb, he said. Dr Raupach said tackling emissions from electricity generation and transport was the quickest way to act. "There is no magic cure, but if we can get rid of electricity generated by coal-fired power stations, we could reduce Australian emissions by 40 per cent," he said. "If we could do that globally, we could reduce emissions by 30 per cent."

Storm runoff levy

Councils are considering charging businesses for stormwater runoff they allow to rush off on to city streets. The Local Government Association is investigating the feasibility of a levy on all non-residential ratepayers to encourage more of the water resource to be harvested. If approved, the charges could be included in rates issued for the 2008/09 financial year. West Torrens Mayor John Trainer said the larger roof areas and increased paving at business sites created a disproportionate amount of stormwater, which caused environmental and safety risks. His motion to investigate the feasibility of the charge was passed at the association's annual general meeting last week. Mr Trainer said a levy would encourage action by businesses to collect, store and reuse stormwater. Businesses saving stormwater would not be charged. "It is just a concept idea at the moment and a lot more homework has to be done on it but we think it's one good way of encouraging conservation of rainwater," Mr Trainer said. He said there were no plans to introduce the levy on households at this stage but it could be an option if water resources continued to dwindle. Business SA chief executive Peter Vaughan said the charge would be yet another cost impost on businesses. "Water storage, usage and disposal is a whole community issue and it is a soft option to hit those who are already over-taxed in this state," he said. A spokesman for Infrastructure minister Patrick Conlon said the proposal had yet to be put to the State Government. He said the Government had already introduced legislation to fast track and allow more stormwater management projects to be completed in council areas.

The Australian

Reef overcoming medical barriers

The ocean - in particular the Great Barrier Reef - is emerging as the planet's richest source of new drugs and medical treatments, according to leading marine ecologists. Chris Battershill, of the Australian Institute of Marine Science, told the AusBiotech conference in Brisbane yesterday the ocean was an "untapped resource" for new medicines. For example, one product showcased at yesterday's conference was a drug used to manage pain, based on the venom of the cone snail found on the Great Barrier Reef. "The reason is that, of the known animal and plant groups, over 90 per cent of all micro-organisms are found in the sea," Dr Battershill said. "Of all the micro-organisms on the planet, they're the ones that have been around for the longest period of time. DNA or RNA genetic material has been in the ocean for a billion years, and the lowest marine multi-cellular organisms have been around for 800 million years. "That means these organisms have been effectively working together in a survivorship sense for that length of time and know how to defend themselves against a whole

range of cellular challenge by using chemicals." Dr Battershill said these simple lifeforms, such as sea sponges, had a lot in common with humans, and their natural defences could be applied to human diseases.

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Australian waters in particular were teeming with marine life that contained chemical compounds with the potential to be developed into useful drugs. "Australian waters are mega-diverse," Dr Battershill said. "There has been relatively small effort spent in examining the oceans around Australia, but the results have been very strong. There's been a very good return for such a small investment." Alek Safarian, the chief executive of Australian clinical research company Novotech, which has been trialling three drugs derived from marine sources over the past year, said the most promising of these was a pain-management drug based on the venom of the Great Barrier Reef's cone snail. Lewis Lee, acting chief executive of Xenome, the company responsible for developing the drug, said the cone snail's venom was very effective in stunning its prey without causing it pain.

Mr Lee said the company had extracted certain properties of the venom and had artificially replicated it in a laboratory. "We hope to use it to treat severe intractable pain which is persistent, nagging and chronic," Mr Lee said. "We are trialling it with cancer patients now." Other drugs being trialled by Novotech include a treatment for hay-fever originating from North Atlantic shrimp, and a drug derived from Tasmanian abalone that could treat bladder cancer. Overseas, many drugs originating from the sea have been approved and are being used with success. The first drug to have been developed from ocean organisms is Prialt, from deep-water snails, which is a potent painkiller touted as 1000 times more effective than morphine.

24th

FarmOnline

Coalition promises new feral animal attack

A re-elected Coalition Government will provide \$15 million for a new program to strengthen the fight against pest and feral animals and the threat they pose to Australia's agricultural industries and environment.

Deputy Prime Minister and Nationals leader, Mark Vaile, announced the policy in Tully, in Far North Queensland today. "It's estimated pest and feral animals directly cost Australian agriculture more than \$720 million a year, not including the long-term losses associated with land degradation," Mr Vaile said. "They also wreak havoc on our native flora and fauna. The Coalition recognises these costs and will build on previous programs and work with local communities to tackle the scourge of feral animals.

"Foxes and rabbits have the biggest impact on biodiversity but feral pigs, goats, mice, carp, dogs, cane toads, camels, cats and horses are also a costly problem.

"This new program will ensure a national approach to the management, and possible eradication, of some of Australia's worst pest animals," Mr Vaile said.

The new program will include:

- * A community grants component with a focus on controlling pest animals during drought to enhance agricultural and environmental recovery following drought (\$6 million);
- * A research and development component, including a demonstration project, to test new feral animal control techniques and facilitate their implementation (\$1 million); and
- * A fund to address the impact of nationally significant pest animals on priority national environmental assets (\$8 million).

"Providing grants directly to local communities will allow them to identify the regional priorities and address them as they see fit," Mr Vaile said.

"This package will provide the resources to implement the Australian Pest Animal Strategy which has been developed by the Australian, State and Territory governments after consultation with those most affected by feral animals."

News.com.au

Global warming will 'cull world's species'

Global warming could cut a swathe through the planet's species over the coming centuries, warns a study released today which shows a link between rising temperatures and mass extinctions reaching back half a billion years. Each of five major eras of declining biodiversity - including one in which 95 percent of the Earth's species disappeared - correspond to cycles of severe warming over the 520-million-year period for which there are fossil records. If emissions of greenhouse gas rise unchecked, the predicted increase in global temperature over the next several hundred years could fall within a similar range as these peaks, said the study, published in a British journal, *Proceedings of The Royal Society B*. Previous studies have either looked for patterns in climate change or the causes of particular mass extinctions. But this is the first time the two been paired together to give a perspective over such a long time. "If our results hold for current warming - the magnitude of which is comparable with the long-term fluctuations in Earth climate - they suggest that extinctions will increase," said lead author Peter Mayhew. The UN's top panel of climate scientists, which won the Nobel Peace Prize earlier this month, forecasts an average increase by 2100 of between 1.1C and 6.4C, compared to 1980-99

levels. The trio of researchers, led by Timothy Benton at the University of Leeds in northern England, used sea surface temperatures - extrapolated from fossilized records of the oxygen and acidity levels - to determine the

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fluctuations over tens of millions of years between "greenhouse" and "icehouse" periods. They then matched this data with changes in the number of plant and animal families inhabiting Earth, also based on fossil records. The study did not dwell on the likely causes of these bouts of warming, whether natural cycles in the earth's climate or, most recently, to the burning of fossil fuels. But whatever the causes, the result has been consistently the same: a more or less severe culling of life on Earth. The death toll included 47 percent of all marine genera - the classification above species - and 18 per cent of land vertebrate families. At the end of the Permian period, some 250 million years ago, the planet's worst mass extinction wiped out 95 per cent of all species, including 70 per cent of land plants, insects and vertebrae.

"Our results provide the first clear evidence that global climate may explain substantial variation in the fossil record in a simple and consistent manner," the study states. The same correlation held true for a flourishing of new species as well, with new flora and fauna multiplying during the interstices of "greenhouse" and "icehouse" cycles. The researchers point out that the time-scale of their study does not help in making short-term predictions.

The Australian

Locals yet to unveil carbon audits

Many of Australia's largest companies are dragging their heels in providing investors with fuller information on their potential carbon liabilities, despite the prospect of emissions trading starting in 2012. While Australian corporates are among the most aware of the risks posed to their businesses by climate change, they lag the world in actually auditing their emissions, according to the latest Carbon Disclosure survey. "There is a disconnect between intention and action," the CEO of state pension fund VicSuper, Bob Welsh, told The Australian. Mr Welsh is chairman of the Investor Group on Climate Change that sponsors the survey. It is part of the international Carbon Disclosure project, which is backed by global institutional investors boasting a combined \$US41 trillion (\$46.07 trillion) in assets under management. Mr Welsh said it was encouraging that the number of Australian companies participating in the annual survey was rising, but he said investors were still largely in the dark on the carbon liabilities of the companies they are investing in. "It is disappointing that companies aren't calculating their emissions and reporting them, but I think it is a transitional thing," Mr Welsh said. About 64 per cent of the ASX top 100 companies index participated in the second annual carbon disclosure survey, representing 71 per cent of the index market capitalisation. Of these, only about 12 per cent had provided a comprehensive profile of their emissions that had been externally verified - but these did include significant emitters such as Boral, Origin Energy, AGL, BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto. About 36 per cent of respondents had established quantitative emission reduction targets, below the global average of 42 per cent. Mr Welsh blamed regulatory uncertainty and the federal Government's comparatively late moves to tackle climate change for the relative sluggishness of Australian corporates in revealing their carbon liabilities. "I think leadership is important. Our current Government hadn't recognised for a very long time the real risks of climate change, whereas in places like Europe it had been accepted that there is real risk," Mr Welsh said. Survey sponsor Goldman Sachs JBWere's head of environment, social and governance research, Andrew Gray, said that no matter who won, the November election would be "crucial" in providing some certainty on a future carbon trading system. However, he warned that issues such as the carbon price, how emission permits would be allocated, and what industries would receive protection remained key unknowns. A spur for corporates will be the introduction in July next year of the new National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting standards, which will apply to about 700 companies. But Mr Welsh said the standards would be of only limited value to investors, because unlike international standards, they did not distinguish between direct emissions from a company's own operations, and emissions indirectly generated by a company's electricity consumption. Only direct emissions are expected to attract a carbon price, while indirect emissions could be paid for through higher electricity prices.

Atomic energy is political poison

Nuclear energy has the power to divide atoms and communities in equal measure. Last year, the Howard Government brought the nuclear debate back in from the cold to wedge Labor on uranium mining. Now Labor is returning the favour. John Howard put nuclear technology back on the policy table with the commissioning of former Telstra boss Ziggy Switkowski to examine and report on the issue. The Prime Minister's primary objective was to point out the looming growth in global demand for nuclear energy and therefore Australian uranium as a response to the threat of climate change. Australia could play a major role in the global expansion and have its own greenhouse-friendly nuclear industry in the process, but not under Labor. It was a carefully laid wedge in the lead-up to the ALP National Conference in April which finally overturned Labor's three-mines-only policy after 23 years. But nuclear energy is a politically poisonous issue to handle. Mention of the technology sends hordes of activists into a frenzy. Coastal communities near potential sites have been hounded

by scare campaigns over future reactor sites, forcing Coalition candidates to threaten to cross the floor on the issue.

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Realising this, Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull last May took remedial action by telling the National Press Club that nuclear energy may not be needed in Australia if clean coal technology was viable. The Coalition wants to use the issue to paint Labor as ideologically moribund on energy policy at a time when all options need to be on the table. Labor's counter is for the Government to put up its detailed proposal on the technology, or shut up. Spookily, they're both right. Modelling by the energy supply industry predicts wholesale electricity prices will double by 2030 if substantial cuts in emissions are needed, nuclear is banned and clean coal doesn't work, as the economy switches. This cost halves if either of these technologies are on the table. By ruling out nuclear energy, Labor is punting the future health of the economy on the hope that enough of the low-emission technologies being developed, from clean coal to advanced renewables, work at an affordable cost. It's a big bet. But getting nuclear energy up and running in Australia from a cold start will take a decade or longer. If you wait to see if clean coal works as suggested by Turnbull, then you won't have access to near zero-emissions baseload from nuclear until 2030. That isn't much help.

Nuclear chief urges fission for future

Planning for a nuclear energy industry in Australia needs to begin next year to deliver deep cuts in greenhouse emissions and cannot wait a decade to see if clean coal works, atomic authority head Ziggy Switkowski says. Dr Switkowski's comments contradict the position held by the Howard Government that Australia may not need to develop a nuclear industry if other low-emissions technologies such as clean coal prove viable. Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull first articulated this position at the National Press Club in May, and reiterated this week that while Australia needed to keep the nuclear option open, it might never have to build a nuclear power station if clean coal was cheaper. But independent assessments claim the capturing and storage of greenhouse gases from coal-fired power stations - clean coal - will not be available at scale until after 2020. And Dr Switkowski said a decision on whether Australia was going to start developing the regulatory framework and other capacity-building required to have nuclear power in place by 2020 needed to be made next year once the details of an emissions-trading scheme were finalised. "Given that energy utilities are waiting for regulatory certainty out there, a decision around whether nuclear is a valid option and the specifics of an emissions-trading scheme are important calls that really should be made in the next 12 months," he told The Australian yesterday. "Once you get the details of an emissions-trading framework in place which moves you to forming views around timetables and targets and costs, then that points to the commercial viability of all the competing platforms and it's a reasonable time to take a position." Kevin Rudd yesterday ruled out nuclear energy in Australia under a Labor government, saying the Government was "walking both sides of the street" on nuclear reactors. The Labor leader said the Prime Minister had declared in May that nuclear energy had a future in Australia based on a government report finding that there could be 25 nuclear reactors across the country. "If you elect a Labor government, there will be no nuclear reactors in Australia, full stop," Mr Rudd said. But Australian Uranium Association spokesman Ian Hore-Lacy said while the Howard Government had never taken a formal position on nuclear energy, a Labor government might have to reconsider its position next year if it sets deep greenhouse reduction targets. "If Labor gets serious about their greenhouse emissions targets and goes in with those, they'll find they have nowhere else to go," he said. "If you are a generator and you were keeping your fingers crossed and hoping that clean coal would be economically feasible by then, you'd be taking a big punt, whereas you know nuclear is economically feasible now if there is a cost on carbon." Dr Switkowski, the former Telstra chief executive who headed Mr Howard's nuclear review, said Labor's approach on energy policy was reliant on a range of unproven technologies. "We all hope solar and wind and geothermal make those sorts of contributions but, at this stage, you are betting on breakthroughs in terms of innovation, and in terms of cost performance, to that extent it's not a valid question with the nuclear alternative," Dr Switkowski said.

Adelaide.now.com

Food cost on up and up

Consumers need to brace themselves for big rises in the price of food as the cost of production increases. The head of one of South Australia's big companies yesterday issued this warning. "Given the price rises we have seen globally in input costs such as fuel, energy, fertiliser, labour and interest rates, we are expecting a major readjustment in food prices," Les Wozniczka, chief executive of Futuris said yesterday. "We have already seen significant increases in commodity prices for dairy products and grains, but we have yet to see the flow-on effects to livestock, meat products and eggs. "Prepare yourselves for some serious inflation in your cost of living, because, globally, we are seeing pricing power starting to return to farmers." Futuris is the parent of rural services company Elders and the fifth largest company listed on the Adelaide registry of the Australian Securities Exchange. Mr Wozniczka warned that unless farmers could recover the increasing cost of doing business they were "increasingly either refusing to produce or converting to alternative products such as ethanol

and biofuel". Oil prices have exceeded a record \$US90 a barrel this month. Global wheat stocks are at a 30-year low, pushing up flour prices by an expected minimum of 30 per cent. Dearer feed will increase meat and

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poultry prices. For Elders, drought was exacerbating the effects of climate change to make this a particularly tough patch, Mr Wozniczka said. "Drought is real and so is climate change," he said. "But unless you believe that it will never rain again in Australia, what we are experiencing is the adverse part of the cycle." However, South Australian Farmers Federation president Wayne Cornish said he was not convinced food prices would rise dramatically. "When it comes to products like bread . . . we would take a lot of convincing to accept (large price rises)," he said. "Even if the price of flour doubled, it would still be a fairly insignificant cost in the production of a loaf of bread." He also said it was "a bit farfetched" for Mr Wozniczka to suggest pricing power was starting to return to farmers. "I wish he was right, but I don't believe he is," Mr Cornish said. Choice spokesman Christopher Zinn said the warnings about food prices rising had been coming "thick and fast". "It's a warning we would certainly take seriously," Mr Zinn said.

Global warming worsens

Australian greenhouse gas reduction targets need to be substantially increased, as emissions grow at a much faster rate than predicted, the CSIRO warns. Researchers from the CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research Centre and environment group Global Carbon Project have analysed emissions data from 2006. They found global emissions had increased by 3 per cent each year this century, instead of 2 per cent each year as previously thought. This compared to a rate of 1 per cent each year in the 1990s. The rate at which carbon dioxide was being absorbed by oceans and land had also decreased in the past 50 years. The efficiency of the Southern Ocean in particular to absorb carbon dioxide had reduced by 30 per cent in the past 20 years. The analysis is published today in the U.S. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences journal. Australian co-author Dr Mike Raupach said the findings meant developed countries would have to lead by example and substantially increase their emission reduction targets. He said the target to reduce emissions by 60 per cent of 2000 levels by 2050 would have to be increased to up to 90 per cent. "The minimum global target is 60 per cent global emission reductions below 2000 levels by 2050 and developed nations, including Australia, have to reduce emissions by substantially more than this," he said. "The message from this picture is emissions are increasing and a lot faster than we thought they would, even a few years ago. Dr Raupach said oceans were "overwhelmed" by the amount of emissions in the atmosphere and were unable to soak up the carbon dioxide as fast as it was produced. Deforestation, heatwaves and drought had affected the amount of carbon land could absorb, he said. Dr Raupach said tackling emissions from electricity generation and transport was the quickest way to act. "There is no magic cure, but if we can get rid of electricity generated by coal-fired power stations, we could reduce Australian emissions by 40 per cent," he said. "If we could do that globally, we could reduce emissions by 30 per cent."

Farmers protest Fed Govt Murray water buyback

Up to 600 farmers and business people from South Australia and Victoria will march on Parliament House in Canberra today in protest against the Coalition's plans for water buybacks in the Murray Darling Basin. Murray-Darling Basin Water Crisis Management Council chairman Ken Trewin said using \$3 billion to buy back water rights — from whom the Government described as non-viable or inefficient irrigators — could wipe \$28 billion off the economy. SOURCE: *The Age*, Melbourne, a Fairfax Media publication.

The Age

In heat of campaign, climate change is out in the cold

The environment, so precious and precarious, should be more prominent on the election agenda.

I do not believe in the above statement, I see, "The Environment and Climate Change" as subject's that should be totally above party politics. So I do not listen, especially, to the minor parties say as they are not going be the leaders after the next election and it so easy to make statements when the choice will not be in your hands.

This is the first federal election in Australia in which climate change is one of the crucial issues. Not that this has been easily discernible on the campaign landscape: at this early stage of the long trek to November 24, the environmental imperatives from the two main party leaders have been as purposeless as tumbleweeds — largely insubstantial and inconsequential, tossed hither and thither by heated rhetoric. Meanwhile, in the real world, the realities of climate change continue their inexorable, inevitable path. In Sunday night's debate, Prime Minister John Howard, calling as ever for a "sensible, measured" response, promised he would establish a climate-change fund to use revenue from emissions trading to assist low-income earners, as well as saying he would try, where so many have failed before, to convince President Bush to establish carbon-output targets. The fund, while it would provide welcome relief, is in effect a by-product of a procedure to control emissions and not in itself of direct environmental worthiness; and the effectiveness of Mr Howard's advice to the President would surely wither in the limited time Mr Bush has left in office, let alone the likelihood of a Democratic successor who would not require it. Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd, whose party's renewable-energy target is expected to be announced later in the campaign, at least sports several more coats of green than Mr Howard's instant-dry

single layer. Even so, Mr Rudd has been falling back on existing objectives, such as a 60 per cent emissions reduction target for 2050.

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It is hardly surprising therefore that the Coalition and Labor have failed to score well in the latest reports on their respective climate-change policies released by the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Climate Institute. Yesterday's institute report gave the Coalition 23 per cent and Labor 40 per cent for their greenhouse policies announced so far. These figures may improve, depending on what the rest of the campaign has in store, but they indicate much needs to be done to recognise the role climate change plays in the lives of everyone — and this requires more than prime ministerial platitudes and a series of new environmentally friendly Labor advertisements. To give them some credit, Australia's political leaders are far more concerned about the environment than at the 2004 federal election. Mr Howard went into this election promising "a balanced approach to the great challenges of climate change and water security", and Mr Rudd has maintained his intention to ratify the Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse emissions by an average 5 per cent below 1990 levels by 2012. This is to be discussed by world leaders at a post-Kyoto debate in Bali in December. It is strange that this momentum has stalled — especially at a time when the jarring reality of the water crisis has intensified. As this newspaper reports today, Victoria appears to be in its driest-ever August, September and October, and water for farmers is reaching \$1200 a megalitre in the Murray-Goulburn area. Such problems require immediate and decisive resolution: action, not promises. Climate change is also on a world scale and in constant evolution. Yesterday, Britain's Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, was advised of "severe practical difficulties" in realising the target of 20 per cent of all European energy to come from renewable sources by 2020 — as pledged by his predecessor, Tony Blair. The cause — carbon emissions in the atmosphere accumulating far more quickly than predicted — and its effect on the scheme's credibility could reduce incentives for other carbon technologies, such as nuclear power. As *The Age* has said, the future is now: do nothing, the consequences will be catastrophic. The election is about many issues. Climate change must be at the forefront.

Major parties ranked low on climate

Both the coalition and Labor have scored poorly in a report card rating their climate change policies so far in the federal election campaign. The Climate Institute gave the coalition a 23 per cent score and Labor 40 per cent for their announced greenhouse policies. The Australian Greens top scored with 90 per cent, the Australian Democrats received 83 per cent and Family First 30 per cent. The results are similar to an Australian Conservation Foundation scorecard released last week. The Climate Institute has scored the coalition 0.5 out of five on cutting greenhouse pollution, while Labor fared little better with a rating of one. Labor has a 60 per cent emissions reduction target for 2050 but no shorter-term goals, while the coalition plans not to set any targets until next year. The opposition did better on international leadership with a rating of 3.5, mainly because of its pledge to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, while the coalition was given 0.5. The coalition did slightly better on switching to clean energy in the wake of announcing a 2020 target of 15 per cent, scoring two to Labor's 1.5. Labor has delayed its announcement of a renewable energy target until later in the campaign. The institute gave the Greens five out of five on cutting greenhouse pollution for its targets to reduce emissions by 30 per cent by 2020 and 80 per cent by 2050. The Democrats scored 4.5 in that area and on switching to clean energy, better than the Greens' four. Greens leader Bob Brown is pleased with his party's score but says the institute should have taken forestry and transport policies into account, as well as the Tasmanian pulp mill. Senator Brown also criticised the group for supporting taxpayer funding of clean coal technology. "The Climate Institute is more in favour of massive amounts of public money going into clean coal than the Greens," he told reporters in Canberra. "We think that money should go into renewable energy. "Maybe we're giving the Climate Institute 90 per cent out of 100."

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FarmOnLine

\$100m State drought funding for Victorian farmers

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) has welcomed the State Government's \$100 million commitment to assist Victorian communities to manage the impacts of the worst drought on record. VFF president, Simon Ramsay, said this morning's announcement went some way towards filling the gaps in drought relief funding already available from the Federal Government and that further State Government drought aid had been strongly promoted by the VFF. "We have lobbied the State Government on this issue for some time, as late as last week we called on (the Premier) John Brumby to fill the gaps in federal drought funding," Mr Ramsay said. "While grants of up to \$3000 to upgrade farm infrastructure are welcome, obviously Victorian farmers would have preferred to see Victoria match the \$20,000 grant commitment offered by the Commonwealth. "The \$1000 rebates for farmers stock and domestic water bills are significant. Relieving irrigators of the burden of paying for a product which in reality they do not receive is welcomed. "The VFF congratulates the government on a rebate system that is more equitable, particularly in assisting large water users who are facing the highest cost

increases." "Other initiatives mooted by the government including pumping the Waranga Basin, the Apprentice Retention Bonus, the CMA Drought Employment Program, additional drought coordinators, and further

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resources to provide technical advice and assistance to farmers, were all direct requests put forward by the VFF in meetings over recent weeks," he said. "Victorian farmers are largely pleased with today's response by the State Government on drought. The Premier has responded to the concerns raised by Victorian farmers and we look forward to continuing to work with the Victorian Government as we manage this crisis," Mr Ramsay concluded.

\$1.8 million boost for primary producers

The Federal Government is providing grants totalling about \$1.8 million to strengthen the long-term futures of primary producers, from asparagus growers to abalone farmers. Federal Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Minister, Peter McGauran, today announced 47 grants of up to \$55,000 to Australia's farming, fishing and forestry industries. The grants will be provided through the Government's new Advancing Agriculture Fund (AgFund) and will help farmers tackle industry issues at the local level. "AgFund will take ideas and improvements from research laboratories and industry boardrooms out to our farmers, fishermen and foresters to help improve their sustainability and profitability," Mr McGauran said. "Projects include a trial of efficient water use systems by the Asparagus Growers of Sunraysia which has the potential to result in substantial water savings across the industry. "In Tasmania, the Abalone Council will hold code of practice workshops to improve the quality of that State's abalone. "Another project will set up trial and training sites across Queensland to show farmers the latest technology on sheep production developed by the Sheep Cooperative Research Centre." AgFund is part of the Government's Agriculture - Advancing Australia (AAA) package which is designed to help the farm sector respond to changing business and operating conditions. This year's Budget provided AAA with \$254.7 million over the next four years.

Tree changers bring gloom with rural boom

An influx of "tree changers" to some of Victoria's most beautiful rural towns may cause serious development pressures unless growth is properly managed, planning experts have warned. The "tree change" phenomenon, which describes city residents going bush in search of a better lifestyle, has gathered pace in recent years. During the past two days, Beechworth in the State's northeast has hosted the nation's first conference dedicated to the tree change phenomenon. The boom times that some rural towns had experienced from residents seeking a lifestyle change could have a downside, planners and academics warned. "As more people take their superannuation, and cash in their metropolitan properties, those places with the greatest level of amenity are realising that they are going to be swamped," La Trobe University's Trevor Budge said. Property values in the most sought-after towns had skyrocketed, Mr Budge said. "In some of these places, the locals can't buy a house or the person who wants to work at the local tourist office can't afford to live there." The median house price in 2001 in country Victoria was \$121,000. By 2006, it was \$220,375. A survey of 600 new residents to arrive in the Macedon Ranges shire during the 16 months to February showed that a majority had moved from the city. Of more than 300 residents to respond, 58 per cent had never lived in a rural area. Coastal councils from around Australia formed the National Sea Change Task Force in 2004 to help them deal with rapid population and tourism growth. The University of Sydney's Dr Nicole Gurran said there were similarities between the effects of sea change on coastal towns and tree change on rural towns. "In sea change, you get linear coastal sprawl and concentration on the most environmentally fragile part, the beach," she said. "In tree change, it's more dispersed." But there was a risk that, as scattered developments built up around regional centres, tree changers would "spread the destruction further". The State Government had focused on growth in the capital with its Melbourne 2030 planning policy, Mr Budge said. "But the rest of Victoria has battled along with only the vaguest policies and very little framework for managing growth." Many planners were now asking whether Victoria needed to establish a tree change taskforce, Mr Budge said. SOURCE: The Age, Melbourne, a Fairfax Media publication.

The Australian

Australia 'right to reject Kyoto'

Two British experts have backed the Australian and US governments' refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, saying emissions caps are the wrong tool for tackling the problem. "Time to ditch Kyoto," British social scientist Gwyn Prins of the London School of Economics and leading climate change researcher Steve Rayner of Oxford University, who holds dual US-British citizenship, wrote in the journal Nature. "The Kyoto Protocol is a symbolically important expression of governments' concern about climate change. But as an instrument for achieving emissions reductions, it has failed," they wrote. They said the world should instead raise spending on clean energy research to tens of billions of dollars a year as part of a broader plan "on a wartime footing". Governments should view global warming as a strategic challenge, like the US drive to put a man on the moon in 1969 or to help Europe recover after World War Two, and move away from Kyoto-style

caps on greenhouse gas emissions, they said.

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The 1997 Kyoto pact obliges 36 industrial nations to cut greenhouse gas emissions to 5 per cent below 1990 levels by 2008-12. Australia and the US have refused to sign up to the agreement. But many nations are over target in a sign that Kyoto is no "silver bullet" for slowing climate change, Mr Rayner told Reuters. The two urged governments to consider carrying out more research instead of tightening Kyoto-style caps. The world's environment ministers will meet in Bali, Indonesia, from December 3-14 to launch negotiations on a successor to Kyoto. "Investment in energy research and development should be placed on a wartime footing," the experts wrote of efforts to create clean energy such as wind and solar power. "It seems reasonable to expect the world's leading economies and emitters to devote as much money to this challenge as they currently spend on military research - in the case of the United States, about \$80 billion a year," they said. They said Kyoto had been modelled on treaties for protecting the ozone layer and curbing acid rain that focused on cuts in a few pollutants. But climate change affected the entire economy and solutions had to be more complex than caps on a few gases. As part of the answer, they said the world should focus on curbs by top emitters rather than seeking agreement among 176 states that have ratified Kyoto. The top 20, led by the US and China, account for 80 per cent of all emissions. Mr Prins and Mr Rayner noted that many Kyoto backers had criticised President George W. Bush for bringing major emitters together for talks in Washington last month. But such talks may be a necessary first step to a broader deal, they said. Mr Bush rejected Kyoto in 2001, saying its emissions caps would be too costly and that Kyoto wrongly omitted goals for poor nations. Kyoto backers see it as a tiny first step to slow the effects of climate change such as more floods, heatwaves and rising seas. But Ben McNeill from the Climate Change Centre at the University Of New South Wales defended Kyoto today, saying the clean development mechanism and targets were important keys to slowing global warming. "Emissions targets dictate for example how effective a carbon emissions trading scheme is. In other words a carbon trading price, and that's a very important part of our strategy in the next decade or so to reduce carbon emissions and combat global warming," Dr McNeill told Radio Australia. The two experts said the world should create markets in greenhouse gases but efforts so far had failed to produce stable prices high enough to spur a major shift away from the fossil fuels widely blamed for causing global warming. They said that, instead of ordering deeper Kyoto-style cuts in emissions beyond 2012, countries should develop policies only after experimenting with various ideas. "Although a bottom-up approach may seem painfully slow and sprawling, it may be the only way to build credible institutions that markets endorse," they wrote. Reuters

Atomic energy is political poison

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FarmOnLine

Irate Qld irrigators burn their water bills

An impassioned plea for the Queensland State Government to address its "illogical water pricing policy" in the wake of the ongoing drought has been made by the St George irrigation community.

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Angry irrigators met at Scott Armstrong's Cooina Cotton shed earlier this week, climaxing with a ritual burning of a SunWater bill that seeks further payment of his Part A charges. It's an increasingly contentious issue that was first raised during the winter months when Water Minister Craig Wallace, speaking in State Parliament, likened the Part A charges to renting a telephone line at home. With the mood of the meeting underscoring "something has to be done" and that "doing nothing" was no longer an option, Mr Armstrong called for irrigation community support from schemes at Emerald, the Downs and Bundaberg. Meanwhile, local Nationals Member, Howard Hobbs and Shadow Minister for Natural Resources and Water Ray Hopper are demanding Mr Wallace meet with the affected irrigators. As well, the Queensland Opposition says it has been asked by the St George irrigation community to pursue a motion of no confidence in the Minister in State Parliament. On the day, it was left to Mr Armstrong to lay bare his frustrations by detailing how he was at his wit's end – both emotionally and financially – in championing not only the survival of his own farm but also the wellbeing of both the local irrigation community and the town of St George. He said the actions of the State Labor Government and its "illogical water pricing policy" were "ripping the heart" out of the district.

SOURCE: Extract from full story in *Queensland Country Life*, October 25 issue.

NSW climate change inquiry into natural resources

The NSW Government will hold an inquiry into sustainable natural resource management and the impact of climate change. State MP for Penrith and chair of the Legislative Assembly committee on natural resource management and climate change, Karyn Paluzzano, has announced an inquiry into sustainable natural resource management with particular reference to the impact of climate change. The committee is calling for written submissions from interested individuals and groups. Ms Paluzzano said the inquiry would address a number of key areas including:

- The likely consequences of human-induced climate change on land (including salinity), water and other natural resources;
- Options for ensuring ecologically sustainable natural resource use, taking into particular account the impacts of climate change;
- Approaches to land and water use management practices on farms and other natural resource management practices, and the role of such practices in contributing to climate change or as a tool in helping to tackle climate change;
- The effectiveness of management systems for ensuring that sustainability measures for the management of natural resources in NSW are achieved, having particular regard to climate change; and
- The likely consequences of national and international policies on climate change on natural resource management in NSW.

Ms Paluzzano said the committee is also interested in building and commercial development sustainability.

Further information about the inquiry can be found at www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/climatechange

SOURCE: NSW Government and FarmOnline.

Pressure on Koperberg to relax fixed water charges

The NSW Irrigators Council says the State's Water Minister, Phil Koperberg, "must act" to assist irrigators facing fixed water charges. NSW Irrigators Council chairman Col Thompson and CEO Andrew Gregson met with Mr Koperberg on Wednesday to explain the situation facing irrigators. Mr Gregson said the council made it clear that irrigators need assistance to meet the fixed charges for water not allocated because of the drought. Fixed charges are levied on water users based on licensed entitlement, not allocation. Even in times of zero or extremely low allocation – such as is currently the case across most of NSW – irrigators receive invoices for the fixed costs of water delivery infrastructure. "We recognise State Water must still fund its operations and fixed charges are necessary," Mr Gregson said. "In times of record low allocation, though, those charges should be met at least in part by the state government." Following heavy lobbying by the NSW Irrigators Council, the Federal Government recently announced a \$20,000 exceptional circumstances grant to irrigators could be applied to fixed charges. While welcome, Mr Gregson said this does not release the NSW Government from its obligations to assist irrigators to get through a crippling drought. "The State Government must understand that irrigators are receiving bills for a service they didn't benefit from and have no cash flow to meet." SOURCE: NSW Irrigators Council and FarmOnline.

News.com.au

Labor, Liberal both fail on emissions policy

The Climate Institute has called for an iron-clad commitment from the Coalition and Labor to addressing global warming after concluding both sides were clinging to policies which would significantly increase greenhouse pollution. Modelling by the Climate Institute to be released today predicts greenhouse gas emissions will rise

about 18 per cent or 102 million tonnes by 2020 (compared with 1990 levels) under Labor. The rise would be 21 per cent, or 114 million tonnes, under the Coalition.

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Climate Institute chief John Connor yesterday said the modelling showed that both parties had failed to propose a set of measurable policies that would halt the rise in pollution, let alone enact the substantial reductions required by 2020. "If Australia and other countries follow a road towards ever-increasing pollution, then we are committing our children to dangerous climate change," Mr Connor said. "Both major parties need to commit to turning around rising greenhouse pollution within the next five years, and substantial reductions beyond, to ensure our children don't inherit a future of ever-worsening droughts, bushfires and other dangerous climate impacts." Based on the modelling, the most effective reduction policies announced so far are Labor's proposed energy efficiency standards for appliances, which would reduce emissions by more than 11 million tonnes, Labor's phasing out of electric water systems (five million tonnes) and the Coalition's pledge to phase out incandescent light bulbs (four million tonnes). Mr Connor said it was impossible to assess the impact or effectiveness of proposed emissions trading schemes as both sides were yet to set short or medium-term targets. Labor, which has a 2050 target, is not due to announce its shorter-term target until next year. The Coalition is not planning to set its shorter-term target until 2010.

Adelaide.now.com

We don't need Murray

Adelaide's reliance on the River Murray could be erased by recycling the wastewater and stormwater the city now discharges into Gulf St Vincent. A desalination plant would further guarantee the city's water supply, bringing the total amount of water obtained from alternative sources above what is consumed in South Australia. An Advertiser investigation has found that if the River Murray could no longer provide water to supplement the city's reservoirs, 72 gigalitres of wastewater from sewage treatment plants could be added to the mains system each year. About 100 gigalitres of stormwater, now discharged uselessly into the gulf, could be collected and cleansed to drinking quality. Once a desalination plant is constructed, another 50 gigalitres a year could supplement supply. The three sources would provide more than the 200 gigalitres consumed by SA Water customers in the past financial year. National Water Commissioner John Radcliffe said 80 per cent of Adelaide's wastewater could be recycled to a standard suitable for drinking. He said a pipeline could take the wastewater from existing treatment plants to reservoirs, where it would be treated further. Flinders University Emeritus Professor Peter Schwerdtfeger said an average rainfall year would shower 250 gigalitres of water on the city. He said the area of buildings and roads would ensure at least half the amount would become stormwater. "If we had the appropriate storage facilities to catch all of the water from our roofs, we wouldn't go thirsty," he said. Aquifer Storage Transfer and Recovery manager Colin Pitman said 100 gigalitres of stormwater discharge could be stored in Adelaide's underground aquifers, where it could be naturally purified to drinking standard. "Adelaide is ideally suited to it and there are a number of locations where this could occur," he said. Water Security minister Karlene Maywald said there was "definitely a place" for recycled stormwater and recycled effluent in Adelaide's water supply, but not for drinking.

Recycled effluent a winner

Recycled effluent from Singapore tastes better than rainwater from Canberra and desalinated water from Perth, says one of the state's expert wine connoisseurs. Hyatt Regency Adelaide purchasing manager Louise Radman has taste tested the three types of water as part of a National Water Commission survey. The Federal Government's independent water body released samples of recycled water, desalinated water and rainwater for the taste test, as all are options being considered for Australian water supplies. Ms Radman said the clean, neutral taste of the recycled effluent was much better than the mineral taste of rainwater. She said desalinated water tasted the worst of the three. "The desalinated water was horrible, it was salty and rubbery." "The rainwater had earthy characteristics and a slimy texture and (was) soft and sweet in the mouth." "The recycled water was very closed, very clean, it was quite neutral but a bit drying." She said, however, she would prefer not to include recycled effluent in mains water supply because of the thought of where it came from. National Water Commission chairman Ken Matthews said a diverse portfolio of water sources was needed to ensure safe and reliable water supplies.

Desal: \$4bn to gain our independence

The cost to erase the River Murray's contribution to Adelaide's water supply would exceed \$4 billion. The State Government estimates the construction and engineering costs for a 50-gigalitre desalination plant could be in excess of \$1.4 billion. Pipelines to divert wastewater from existing treatment plants to Adelaide's reservoirs could cost \$2.4 billion, based on the price of a similar project in Brisbane. Stormwater recycling costs would depend on the expense of wetland construction and water diversion. The trial Aquifer Storage Treatment and Recovery project at Parafield, which recycles 140 megalitres a year, has received \$1.5 million in funding.

ASTR manager Colin Pitman said the price of producing one kilolitre of recycled stormwater could be half the cost of producing one kilolitre of desalinated water. Desalination has been predicted to cost at least \$1.20 a kilolitre. "It is comparable to the price of water that's pumped from the River Murray and is a relatively low cost to do compared to desalination," he said.

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National water commissioner John Radcliffe said construction of pipelines and the cost of energy to pump it would be wastewater recycling's biggest expense.

"Provided we have a good wastewater system anyway and the water is treated to Environment Protection Authority discharge standards, the cost would be one-third of desalinated water," he said.

Flinders University Emeritus Professor Peter Schwerdtfeger said the State Government should divert more money into developing water infrastructure. "What is more important - horse and car racing or future water supply?" he said.

NEWS.com.au

Water rate hike warning

Council rates for homeowners in southeast Queensland could skyrocket because of a dispute over the value of the region's water assets. Brisbane ratepayers face a hike of \$250 a year and Gold Coast residents could be paying \$350 more for their local services, their mayors claim, if the State Government fails to pay adequate compensation for the water infrastructure. Southeast Queensland councils are relinquishing 185 water assets to the state next year, including dams, water-treatment and sewerage plants. The two tiers of government have argued for months over the value of the assets. Councils say they are worth at least \$6 billion, while the state is considering paying about \$2 billion. The money the councils are to be paid is to be invested to provide an income stream to offset the revenue generated by water assets. The mayors say a \$6 billion price tag would give them similar cashflow. Any shortfall would have to be recovered through rate increases, or services would have to be slashed, they claim. Both sides have hired major consulting firms, which have issued conflicting reports. Brisbane Lord Mayor Campbell Newman said yesterday councils didn't want to profit from the transition, only to maintain the same revenues. Rates would have to jump 13.5 per cent in Brisbane to make up for the \$100 million shortfall of a lower valuation, he said. "This is the great water asset swindle. It's the political and economic equivalent of a smash-and-grab robbery," he said. Gold Coast Mayor Ron Clarke said the water assets would be worth much more if sold privately. Selling for \$2 billion would be "straight robbery", he said. Treasurer Andrew Fraser said the state had not received a copy of the report and councils had not substantiated the \$6 billion figure. He said the "working estimate" for the assets was between \$1 billion and \$2 billion. "The Treasury is continuing a due-diligence process with councils and I would urge the Lord Mayor to support these negotiations rather than seek to prosecute the negotiations in this manner," he said. As for the "smash and grab" charge, Mr Fraser said the Government remained committed to fair compensation. "I would remind the Lord Mayor that ratepayers and taxpayers are one and the same group of people," he said. "This should not be about two levels of government arguing about cash but about a better system of water supply." Opposition spokeswoman Fiona Simpson accused the Government of ignoring "the real costs of their decisions".

The Australian

Heat on ALP over 'failure' of protocol

The Coalition has launched a counter-attack on Labor's climate change policy following calls for the Kyoto Protocol to be scrapped and the British Government's backdown on renewable energy targets by 2020. A scathing attack on the Kyoto Protocol published yesterday in leading science journal Nature says the global greenhouse deal is a failure that should be scrapped and replaced after 2012. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said the paper exposed Labor's commitment to ratify Kyoto as just a public relations stunt. Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull said it showed Labor did not have a genuine strategy on climate change. Meanwhile, electricity generators said yesterday they might need to use nuclear energy if they were to deliver the deep cuts in emissions promised by Labor. Mr Turnbull said there was no reason for Australia to sign, or not sign, Kyoto because it was a "purely symbolic statement", with negotiations now focused on a deal to cut greenhouse emissions after 2012. "I don't think Labor has a strategy on climate change because their strategy is just to ratify Kyoto," he said. The Brown Government in Britain yesterday confirmed it would wind back its renewable energy target of 20 per cent by 2020, with leaked briefing documents claiming the target was too expensive and impractical. Labor has been planning to announce renewable targets of up to 25 per cent, while the Coalition last month committed to clean energy targets of 15 per cent. Mr Turnbull said the decision in Britain reflected how easy it was for politicians to create headlines by setting big targets, "but what they don't say is how they will meet these targets". The commentary in Nature, by Gwyn Prins from the London School of Economics and Steve Rayner from Oxford University, says advocates of Kyoto are reluctant to embrace a new approach because it would mean having to admit its failure. "It (Kyoto) has achieved no demonstrable reductions in emissions or even in anticipated emissions growth," the paper says. National Generators Forum

executive director John Boshier said the generators believed "all technological options for electricity generation should be available if deep cuts are required".

Snowy sacrificed to ensure supply

The health of the Snowy River will be sacrificed for towns on the other side of the Great Dividing Range.

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Fears that towns and cities could run out of water because of the drought have prompted the NSW Government to quarantine supplies destined for the Snowy River for emergency town use. All environmental flows down the Snowy have been halted.

NSW Primary Industries and Energy Minister Ian Macdonald said: "It would be reckless for the Government to continue to push water down the river when long-term drinking supplies are under threat."

The only water that will flow down the river is equivalent to less than 1 per cent of annual natural flows - and that water is allocated to meet town and riverfront property stock and domestic supplies.

The decision on the Snowy flows has angered locals who live along the river and environment groups, who won a fight about five years ago to restore some water to the beleaguered river.

World Wildlife Fund water spokesman Nick Heath said: "This is such an iconic river and a key part of Australia's history - and we can't even get a measly environmental flow after years of water reform.

"We understand people need water to survive, but this latest decision is another sign that the river has been overallocated and no serious measures have been taken to deal with that issue."

WWF has called for an independent umpire to be installed to make decisions on water.

Snowy River Alliance president John Gallard said that without environmental flows, the river would deteriorate.

Extinction threat for 25 species of primate

Beijing: Mankind's closest relatives are teetering on the brink of their first extinctions in more than a century, hunted by humans for food and medicine and squeezed from forest homes, a report on endangered primates said yesterday. There are just a few dozen of the most threatened gibbons and langurs left, and one colobus may already have gone the way of the dodo, the report on the 25 most vulnerable primates warned. "You could fit all the surviving members of these 25 species in a single football stadium - that's how few of them remain on earth today," said Russell Mittermeier, president of Conservation International, a US-based environmental group.

Primates include great apes such as chimpanzees and gorillas, as well as smaller cousins ranging from gibbons and lemurs to monkeys. They are sought after as food and pets and for traditional medicines. Others are victims of competition for living space and resources as forests that make their habitat are chopped down. "In Central and West Africa, primate meat ... is a luxury item for the elite," Mr Mittermeier said from Cambodia. "Here it's even more for medicinal purposes, with most of the more valuable species going to markets in south-eastern China." Sumatran orang-utans, one of two great apes on the list along with cross-river gorillas, were threatened by a pet trade into Taiwan, Mr Mittermeier said. But he noted that primates had survived the 20th century without losing a single known species - in fact, new ones were rapidly being found - and should be relatively easy to protect. China's environment and animals are suffering from its rapid and dirty economic growth, which may already have pushed a species of dolphin to extinction. But although its Hainan gibbon is thought to be the most endangered of all primates, with fewer than 20 surviving, the country's efforts to save the golden monkeys of remote southwestern Yunnan province have set a global model. "They have local villagers following these groups on a daily basis," Mr Mittermeier said. "We are looking now at applying that in Vietnam, in Madagascar and a few other places."

The Australian

World's survival at risk: UN report

THE speed at which mankind has used the Earth's resources over the past 20 years has put "humanity's very survival" at risk, a study involving 1400 scientists has concluded. Saying the scale of the challenge is huge, the scientists have told the United Nations that environmental problems must be treated as a top priority if they are to be solved. The environmental audit for the UN found that each person in the world now requires a third more land to supply his or her needs than the Earth can supply. Thirty per cent of amphibians, 23 per cent of mammals and 12 per cent of birds are under threat of extinction, while one in 10 of the world's major rivers runs dry every year before it reaches the sea. The bleak verdict on the environment was issued as an "urgent call for action" by the UN Environment Program, which said that the "point of no return" was fast approaching. Achim Steiner, the program's executive director, said the international community's response to environmental issues was at times "courageous and inspiring", but all too often inadequate.

"The systematic destruction of the Earth's natural and nature-based resources has reached a point where the economic viability of economies is being challenged and where the bill we hand to our children may prove impossible to pay," he said. The report was critical of the lack of action by governments across the world in protecting the environment from being degraded. The response to climate change was described as "woefully

inadequate" but it was only one of several major problems that needed to be addressed effectively. "We appear to be living in an era in which the severity of environmental problems is increasing faster than our policy responses," the report said. "To avoid the threat of catastrophic consequences, we need new policy approaches to change the direction and magnitude of drivers of environmental change."

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The report was drafted and researched by almost 400 scientists, all experts in their fields, whose findings were subjected to review by another 1000 of their peers. Scientists conducting the review, 157 of whom were nominated by 48 governments, were split into groups of expertise for each of the 10 chapters of the report. Other experts were selected from more than 50 research centres in 47 countries. Marion Cheadle, of the program, said damage sustained to the environment was of fundamental economic concern, and if unchecked would affect growth. The report assessed the impact on the environment since 1987. Climate change was identified as one of the most pressing problems but the condition of fresh water supplies, agricultural land and biodiversity were considered to be of equal concern. The Brown Government in Britain yesterday confirmed it would wind back its renewable energy target of 20 per cent by 2020, with leaked briefing documents claiming the target was too expensive and impractical. Labor has been planning to announce renewable targets of up to 25 per cent, while the Coalition last month committed to clean energy targets of 15 per cent. Mr Turnbull said the decision in Britain reflected how easy it was for politicians to create headlines by setting big targets, "but what they don't say is how they will met these targets". The commentary in Nature, by Gwyn Prins from the London School of Economics and Steve Rayner from Oxford University, says advocates of Kyoto are reluctant to embrace a new approach because it would mean having to admit its failure. "It (Kyoto) has achieved no demonstrable reductions in emissions or even in anticipated emissions growth," the paper says. National Generators Forum executive director John Boshier said the generators believed "all technological options for electricity generation should be available if deep cuts are required".

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PM meets babes, avoids climate

John Howard happily greeted bikini-clad models today, but when asked if Cabinet recently rejected ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, he didn't deny it. The Australian Financial Review today reported Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull led a push for the Howard government to ratify the international climate change agreement, but was rebuffed by cabinet. Mr Turnbull reportedly argued the government would gain kudos and lose nothing by signing up, but cabinet decided the backflip would not look credible with voters. Mr Howard today repeatedly refused to confirm or deny the report, saying only that the world was in need of a new agreement. "What we need is a new international agreement, with all of the major emitters including China," he told reporters in Sydney. Meanwhile, Mr Howard was feted like a political hero on his return to Sydney after a week of campaigning in central and western Australia. Mr Howard's early morning walk today along the Sydney Harbour Foreshore turned into a hero's welcome. A roar of approval went up as the Prime Minister passed through Kirribilli markets where early morning stall holders were setting up and first shoppers arriving. "Just keep going, keep going, keep going," one man urged the politically struggling leader. Mr Howard was then trailed by a car load of young women who cheered and yelled "we love you John" as the Liberal leader headed back to Kirribilli House through the jacaranda-lined streets of Sydney's lower north shore. Earlier Mr Howard stopped to shake hands with two bikini models who were waiting for him to pass by on the harbour's edge. He also spoke briefly with two women doing boxing exercises on the foreshore, telling them he too boxed often, in a political sense. And it didn't stop there with a young man asking the Prime Minister to give him a hand carrying some boxes into a cafe. Mr Howard declined. It was a rare half hour of spontaneous interaction in an election campaign that is media managed to extremes.

28th

NEWS.com.au

Is Turnbull trying to save himself?

The Coalition's shaky election campaign has been further de-stabilised with revelations that Malcolm Turnbull tried to convince Cabinet colleagues to back the Kyoto protocol just six weeks ago. Prime Minister John Howard repeatedly refused to deny the damaging claim while campaigning in the Labor held seat of Parramatta yesterday. Mr Turnbull's Liberal colleagues are blaming him for the strategic leak, which they say is designed to try to show his commitment to combating climate change in the face of resistance by Mr Howard. They say the story was deliberately - and selfishly - targeted at saving Mr Turnbull's hide in his own marginal seat of Wentworth, regardless of the damage to the government. Mr Turnbull has been under pressure in Wentworth not only on issues such as climate change but also over his recent approval of a large paper pulp mill in Tasmania. He holds the seat by a margin of only 2.5 per cent and internal Labor Party polling suggests the

result is still too close to call. One minister described Mr Turnbull as "desperate" to hold onto Wentworth. The Environment Minister was described as being "very gloomy" about his prospects. A spokesman for Mr Turnbull categorically denied the Environment Minister was responsible for the leak. But it was an embarrassment for Mr Howard's struggling campaign.

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"What we need is a new international agreement, with all of the major emitters including China," he said in response to questions about the leak. Taking advantage of the Government's woes, Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd yesterday announced another \$150 million policy aimed at tackling climate change. "These two statements by Mr Turnbull torpedo amidst the Howard government's credibility on climate change," Mr Rudd said. "This is a most significant development."

Loyalty

There was further questioning of Mr Turnbull's loyalty to the party with revelations a member of his staff endorsed a profile page touting his leadership ambitions under the heading "Malcolm Turnbull for PM" on the internet site Facebook. The page urged those visiting the site to "Show your support for Malcolm, and maybe he will knock Costello off in the race for PM in waiting". However, a Turnbull spokesman said that it was a completely innocent interaction over the internet. He said: "It's simply the way that kids communicate these days." Meanwhile, a shock new poll published in the *Canberra Times* gives an indication of the extent of the problems faced by the Coalition. The Liberals are trailing Labor in the bellwether NSW seat of Eden-Monaro, just outside the national capital, by a whopping 56 per cent to 44 per cent on the two-party-preferred vote. In previous elections, Eden-Monaro has traditionally always gone with the government of the day. Meanwhile, Liberal candidates around the country have been busy stripping Mr Howard out of their campaigns in what one observer described as "Howard overboard". Although both Mr Howard and Mr Costello are mentioned in Mr Turnbull's campaign material, candidates such as Karen Chijoff in critical seats like Lindsay, in western Sydney have completely personalised their brochures, failing to mention Mr Howard once. Samantha McIntosh has adopted a similar approach in the key Victorian seat of Ballarat. In the marginal Adelaide seat of Sturt, the Minister for Ageing, Christopher Pyne, mentions neither the Liberal Party nor Mr Howard on his billboards -- instead promoting himself for the poll as a "local who gets things done". Likewise, Andrew Laming in the marginal Brisbane seat of Bowman simply declares that he's "working to get more done locally". And Workplace Relations Minister Joe Hockey, who is facing a strong challenge in his seat of North Sydney from former ABC weatherman Mike Bailey, has published a six-page booklet that does not once mention the Prime Minister.

PM 'has full confidence' in Turnbull

Prime Minister John Howard has dodged questions about whether he believes his Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull deliberately leaked information that he had recommended to Cabinet that the Government ratify the Kyoto Protocol. But he said Mr Turnbull was a straightforward person who enjoyed his full confidence. A newspaper report yesterday said Mr Turnbull led a push for the Coalition government to ratify the international climate change agreement, but was rebuffed by Cabinet. The Coalition has long refused to ratify Kyoto, while Labor has a policy of immediately joining in the United Nations deal. "I'm not in the business of responding to newspaper articles," Mr Howard said on the Nine Network today. "I'll defend Mr Turnbull. He's an excellent minister and he enjoys my full confidence. "I've always found Malcolm good and straightforward to deal with. I think he's done a very good job as environment minister." Mr Howard refused to comment directly on any of Mr Turnbull's reported comments. "What I'm saying to (viewers) is that the most important thing to do internationally is to get a new agreement that includes all of the world's major emitters," he said. Mr Turnbull, when pressed on the same issue today, said only that it was not for him to express personal beliefs of this kind, only those of the Government.

From various sources in America

Crisis feared as U.S. water supplies dry up

Government projects at least 36 states will face shortages within five years

States in the parched Southeast are fighting to keep their water flowing as major reservoirs dry up. West Palm Beach, Florida. - An epic drought in Georgia threatens the water supply for millions. Florida doesn't have nearly enough water for its expected population boom. The Great Lakes are shrinking. Upstate New York's reservoirs have dropped to record lows. And in the West, the Sierra Nevada snow pack is melting faster each year. Across America, the picture is critically clear — the nation's freshwater supplies can no longer quench its thirst. The government projects that at least 36 states will face water shortages within five years because of a combination of rising temperatures, drought, population growth, urban sprawl, waste and excess. "Is it a crisis? If we don't do some decent water planning, it could be," said Jack Hoffbuhr, executive director of the Denver-based American Water Works Association. Water managers will need to take bold steps to keep taps flowing, including conservation, recycling, desalination and stricter controls on development. "We've hit a remarkable

moment,” said Barry Nelson, a senior policy analyst with the Natural Resources Defence Council. “The last century was the century of water engineering. The next century is going to have to be the century of water efficiency.” The price tag for ensuring a reliable water supply could be staggering. Experts estimate that just upgrading pipes to handle new supplies could cost the nation \$300 billion over 30 years. “Unfortunately, there’s just not going to be any more cheap water,” said Randy Brown, Pompano Beach’s utilities director.

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Global issue

It’s not just America’s problem — **it’s global.**

Australia is in the midst of a 30-year dry spell, and population growth in urban centres of sub-Saharan Africa is straining resources. Asia has 60 percent of the world’s population but only about 30 percent of its fresh water. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a United Nations network of scientists, said this year that by 2050 up to 2 billion people worldwide could be facing major water shortages. The U.S. used more than 148 trillion gallons of water in 2000, the latest figures available from the U.S. Geological Survey. That includes residential, commercial, agriculture, manufacturing and every other use — almost 500,000 gallons per person. Coastal states like Florida and California face a water crisis not only from increased demand, but also from rising temperatures that are causing glaciers to melt and sea levels to rise. Higher temperatures mean more water lost to evaporation. And rising seas could push saltwater into underground sources of freshwater. Florida represents perhaps the nation’s greatest water irony. A hundred years ago, the state’s biggest problem was it had too much water. But decades of dikes, dams and water diversions have turned swamps into cities

Wasted water

Little land is left to store water during wet seasons, and so much of the landscape has been paved over that water can no longer penetrate the ground in some places to recharge aquifers. As a result, the state is forced to flush millions of gallons of excess into the ocean to prevent flooding. Also, the state dumps hundreds of billions of gallons a year of treated wastewater into the Atlantic through pipes — water that could otherwise be used for irrigation. Florida’s environmental chief, Michael Sole, is seeking legislative action to get municipalities to reuse the wastewater. “As these communities grow, instead of developing new water with new treatment systems, why not better manage the commodity they already have and produce an environmental benefit at the same time?” Sole said.

Official: Florida not doing enough

Florida leads the nation in water reuse by reclaiming some 240 billion gallons annually, but it is not nearly enough, Sole said. Floridians use about 2.4 trillion gallons of water a year. The state projects that by 2025, the population will have increased 34 percent from about 18 million to more than 24 million people, pushing annual demand for water to nearly 3.3 trillion gallons. More than half of the state’s expected population boom is projected in a three-county area that includes Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Palm Beach, where water use is already about 1.5 trillion gallons a year. “We just passed a crossroads. The chief water sources are basically gone,” said John Mulliken, director of water supply for the South Florida Water Management District. “We really are at a critical moment in Florida history.”

Technology holds promise

In addition to recycling and conservation, technology holds promise. There are more than 1,000 desalination plants in the U.S., many in the Sunbelt, where baby boomers are retiring at a dizzying rate. The Tampa Bay Seawater Desalination Plant is producing about 25 million gallons a day of fresh drinking water, about 10 percent of that area’s demand. The \$158 million facility is North America’s largest plant of its kind. Miami-Dade County is working with the city of Hialeah to build a reverse osmosis plant to remove salt from water in deep brackish wells. Smaller such plants are in operation across the state. Californians use nearly 23 trillion gallons of water a year, much of it coming from Sierra Nevada snowmelt. But climate change is producing less snow pack and causing it to melt prematurely, jeopardizing future supplies. Experts also say the Colorado River, which provides fresh water to seven Western states, will probably provide less water in coming years as global warming shrinks its flow. California, like many other states, is pushing conservation as the cheapest alternative, looking to increase its supply of treated wastewater for irrigation and studying desalination, which the state hopes could eventually provide 20 percent of its freshwater. “The need to reduce water waste and inefficiency is greater now than ever before,” said Benjamin Grumbles, assistant administrator for water at the Environmental Protection Agency. “Water efficiency is the wave of the future.”

Water Restrictions Get Tougher In Stafford

Stafford, Virginia. - Starting next week, residents in Stafford County will be asked to conserve more water. The severe drought is taking its toll on the county's two main water supplies, Abel and Smith Lakes. Even though some water restrictions were put in place a couple of weeks ago, the level of water in the two lakes is still dropping. So county leaders say tougher water restrictions are needed. They say if the current trend continues, Stafford could run out of water in four months.

Drought Causes Extreme Water Shortage In Loudoun Co. Town

Purcellville, Virginia. - Water reservoirs in Purcellville were nearly empty on Thursday night. Authorities said there is only 60 days worth of water left in the town's reservoirs. The drought first crippled farmers and their crops, and now it threatens drinking water that 6,500 residents depend on. "It sounds pretty serious to me," one resident said. Town leaders said they're worried that it could take just two months before taps go dry. However, they said, no one would allow that to happen in Purcellville.

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Leaders said they could be forced to take the extreme measure of buying water from private well owners. That would be a last, very expensive resort, they said. It could cost six figures a month to truck in water, Purcellville Mayor Robery Lazaro said. "Worst case, if it didn't rain and we needed to truck in water, it could cost up to \$100,000 a month," Lazaro said. With the major reservoir at just 20 percent of capacity, only rain can ease Purcellville's drought. Consumers and businesses, like restaurants, conserve what they can. But the water woes in the town now reach beyond the tap. At Magnolia's restaurant, the well has gone dry when it comes to conservation. "There's not a lot that we can do," manager Nathan Myers said. "We use 10,000 gallons of water a month." Purcellville is in negotiations with several private well owners to buy rights to their water. Town leaders said they hope to have water rights secured within the next few days.

Officials Develop Long-Term Plans For Drought

Raleigh, N.C. -- The seriousness of the drought becomes more and more evident on a daily basis, and for water managers charged with stretching resources, the time has come for them to look at what to do if the supplies reach critically low levels. With the drought continuing to dehydrate the state, The Army Corps Of Engineers has drastically reduced the amount of water it releases from both Jordan and Falls Lakes & ldquo; It's a very delicate balancing act to release just enough so that the downstream users can survive, but yet not drastically impact the lake itself,& rdquo; says Terry Brown of the Army Corps of Engineers. And as water control manager for the Corps, it & rsquo;s his job top oversee the discharge into rivers like the Neuse. Those who live near the river can see the difference. & ldquo; I know it's getting to the critical point at this stage, & rdquo; says Smithfield resident Joe Loia, & ldquo; Because I've never seen it so dry down here. & rdquo; The Corps is trying to keep about 135 million gallons of water a day flowing into the Neuse so that downstream users all the way to New Bern will have enough water for their own uses. & ldquo;You have an intake in Smithfield, Johnston County and Goldsboro, & rdquo; says Brown. & ldquo;River flows are critical to them because if the river went dry they would only have three days of drinking water available.& rdquo; For Loia, daily walks along the Neuse River have him worried about not having enough water because he believes we're wasting it on non-critical uses. & ldquo; What do you need a clean car for right now? & rdquo; he says. & ldquo;To have a green lawn and waste water when it's so precious right now borders on the ignorant and selfishness to some degree.” Statistically, officials believe we'll get some rain before January to help partially replenish the parched water supply. But, realistically, they're looking at the possibilities the water supplies might be exhausted. According to Brown, a worst case scenario would be & ldquo;that we hit the bottom of the conservation pool at Falls Lake then pull from the remaining 36 feet of water.” He adds, after that & rsquo;s exhausted, & ldquo;We might then have to tap into the City of Raleigh lakes downstream.” He's referring to lakes Benson, Johnson and Wheeler. In the meantime, Governor Mike Easley says he'll start sending out water conservation teams to work with communities hardest hit by the drought.

Hit by drought, Turkey's capital prays for rain

Ankara, city of 4 million, could run dry due in three months

Ankara, Turkey - With arms outstretched and the palms of their hands turned toward the ground, worshippers are praying for rain at mosques in the Turkish capital, which is suffering from drought and serious water shortages. Record-low snow and rainfall this past winter, coupled with searing summer temperatures, have shrunk the reservoirs of Ankara, a city of some 4 million people, leaving just enough water to last another three months, according to Hayday Kocaker, who heads the state water authority. As city authorities come under criticism for their handling of the shortage, Turks have turned to God for relief. "We stand before you, we beg you to answer our prayers," said Fikret Latifoglu, the imam of the Hacibayram mosque, one of the city's oldest, in leading special prayers for rain before the start of traditional Friday prayers. His words were broadcast through loudspeakers to the faithful standing in the mosque's courtyard. "Don't leave innocent children and the old, animals who cannot speak for themselves, the trees, the ants and the birds without water. We helplessly beg for your mercy," he said. Similar prayers were said at about 750 other mosques around the city, with worshippers holding the palms of their hands toward the ground — instead of toward God, as in traditional Muslim prayers — to symbolize falling rain. Hoping to stretch supplies, the municipality began on Aug. 1 supplying water to homes only in two-day intervals. But increased pressure while reopening pipelines caused two main lines to burst, leaving residents without water for about five days. The city's mayor, Melih Gokcek, faces calls to resign for allegedly failing to take drought precautions. Critics say he has wasted Ankara's money on embellishing the city, building parks and establishing a soccer team, without investing in its infrastructure.

Gokcek denies the accusations. He also drew ire by suggesting that residents take vacations and leave the city to lower demand on water supplies. The municipality began a project to divert water from the nearby Kizilirmak River in March, but the water was not expected to reach the city until late November. Hospitals were being supplied water through tankers. But concerns over hygiene forced at least two hospitals to begin delaying non-urgent surgery, keeping visitors to a minimum and discharging patients who are not in life-threatening condition.

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Authorities have also debated whether to delay the start of the school year by a month — to mid-October — to avert the possible spread of diseases at schools. Sales of large, plastic water containers have surged in Ankara, as have the sales of bottled drinking water. The containers, which sold for about \$4.50 before the water cuts, were now selling for \$13. Some restaurants began serving food on paper plates with plastic knives and forks. Bans on watering lawns and washing cars with hoses have been in place for months, and there have been television ads and Friday sermons at mosques to encourage people to save water. Kocaker said the water shortage in the city should be taken as a warning of worse to come unless residents begin to save water. "Its absence causes us huge grievance and yet when we have it we waste it without realizing what an important blessing it is," Kocaker told AP Television News in an interview. The city has suffered three droughts in the past 50 years, Kocaker said. "But with the development of agricultural irrigation, population increases and increase in the amounts of water people use, as well as the period of drought, global warming and climate change, we are experiencing this extraordinary situation," Kocaker said.

Drought Contaminates Manassas Water Supply, Health Officials Say

Manassas, Virginia. - The Washington-area drought has been blamed for drying up some Virginia reservoirs, and now officials in Manassas say the lack of rain is contaminating their water supply. Virginia health officials have determined there is too much trihalomethane in the drinking water in Manassas. Experts said the lack of rain causes algae to grow. It then reacts to chlorine during the treatment process, causing the contamination. Drinking large quantities of the contaminated water can cause health problems, officials said. The city is launching an overhaul of its treatment process. Manassas had a similar problem during another drought in 2002.

Drought Causes 3-State 'Water War'

Greenville, South Carolina - The extreme drought in North Carolina, Georgia and Alabama is causing what some are referring to as a water war. The states' governors will meet next week to work out water rights. The situation is so bad in Georgia that some officials said that they are counting down the days until the water will run out.

Some Georgia officials say that the city of Atlanta only has about a couple months worth of water left. Georgia's Lake Lanier is 15 feet below capacity.

Florida Joins Alabama In Water Fight

Montgomery, Alabama (AP) - Alabama Governor Bob Riley now has an ally in the fight to keep Georgia from gaining control of how much water is released from a federal reservoir in Georgia. Florida Governor Charlie Crist wrote President Bush yesterday asking him to "strongly oppose" Georgia's drought disaster declaration request for Lake Lanier outside Atlanta. On Monday, Riley also Bush to deny Georgia's request. Riley says both states understand the "tremendous economic harm" that could be caused if Georgia cuts back on water releases. Riley will visit the Farley Nuclear Plant today in Houston County to discuss the threat that a water reduction could pose to the plant's operations.

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FarmOnLine

Labor promises more money for rural locums

After yesterday challenging Labor to come clean with its rural health plans, the Rural Doctors Association of Australia is praising the Opposition for pledging extra support for the specialist obstetricians locum scheme (SOLS). Labor's health spokesperson, Nicola Roxon, has today promised an extra \$8.5 million for rural obstetricians operating under the highly successfully program, while speaking at the RDAA's national conference in Canberra. Labor will extend SOLS to provide cost-effective locum relief not only for rural specialist obstetricians, but also for rural GP obstetricians and rural GP anaesthetists. And Labor has announced it will double the number of rural medical training places through the John Flynn Scholarship Scheme, from 150 to 300 places. RDAA president Dr Peter Rischbieth, has been calling for these initiatives for some time. "Labor's announcement is great news for doctors working in the bush and for those living in rural communities," Dr Rischbieth said. RDAA's Rural Specialists Group was the driving force behind the introduction of SOLS. A pilot phase funded by the Federal Government has since assisted many rural specialist obstetricians with much-needed, cost-effective locum relief. "SOLS has proven itself to be extremely valuable in supporting rural specialist obstetricians to remain in rural practice by providing them with essential, cost-effective locum relief so they can take time out of their practice for continuing medical education or a much-

needed holiday," Dr Rischbieth said. "And by having a locum obstetrician in town while the usual obstetrician is away, there have been significant cost savings as many pregnant women have not had to be transferred to larger centres through expensive air retrieval to give birth." Dr Rischbeith says Labor's promise to double the number of rural scholarship places for medical students through the John Flynn Scholarship Scheme would help more medical students to train in rural and remote areas. This will make it much more likely that they will return to the bush to practise once they graduate, he said.

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Despite health funding announcements from both Labor and the Coalition in the past two days, the RDAA is holding out for big ticket items, which it says will "save rural healthcare from imminent disaster". These include rural-specific support incentives for rural doctors, more funding quarantined for rural hospitals and their maternity and other procedural services, and the introduction of a Rural Health Obligation. SOURCE: National rural news from *FarmOnline*.

Odds on for wet summer ahead for all but hot, dry Vic

Most of Australia has better than 50:50 odds of receiving above average rainfall over summer, except for Victoria which can expect a hot and dry three months. The latest long-range forecast from the Bureau of Meteorology for the period covering November to January shows most of Australia has a 50pc or better chance of above average rainfall for that period. That figure rises to 60pc for most of NSW and the southern half of Queensland, as well as the southwestern farming and grazing lands of Western Australia. A small pocket of land covering the Queensland/NSW border has a 65pc chance, while most of the Northern Territory and WA's Kimberley region has a 65-70pc of above average rainfall. However, Victoria's odds are 45pc for above median rainfall. And this is combined with a temperature outlook of a 70pc chance of above average maximum temperatures. Southern NSW and SA also have a 65-70pc chance of above average maximums for November to January. The Bureau says that the pattern of seasonal temperature and rainfall odds across Australia is mostly a result of continuing higher than average temperatures over parts of the tropical and sub-tropical Indian Ocean. SOURCE: Bureau of Meteorology and *FarmOnline*.

NEWS.com.au

Rudd turns up green heat on PM

A Labor government would offer \$200 million to farmers and landowners to help them clean up their act to protect the Great Barrier Reef from climate change and declining water quality, as Kevin Rudd seeks to maintain the pressure on the Coalition on environmental issues. Mr Rudd's announcement comes on top of a \$1 billion water scheme outlined yesterday. The Labor Leader has said today's plan is the largest ever single financial contribution to saving the reef. The Labor focus on green issues and climate change keeps the federal election campaign heat on the Coalition's policy split revealed by a leaked report claiming that Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull urged Cabinet to sign the Kyoto Protocol but was rebuffed by the Prime Minister. That revelation has threatened to derail the Coalition campaign, as Liberal insiders accused Mr Turnbull of leaking the story to save his seat of Wentworth - something Mr Turnbull denied. Liberal strategists are also concerned that the Prime Minister is spending too much time talking about the past, leading to a constant focus on interest rates. John Howard has said today that the Coalition is united in its rejection of Kyoto, dismissing Labor's promise to sign on as not being in the national interest. "We are willing to be part of an international agreement ... but provided it also applies in an appropriate way to all of the world's major emitters," he said on ABC radio. "What is the point of having a situation where perhaps by the year 2030 two-thirds of the emissions are coming from countries that are not part of the international agreement?" Kyoto's reduction targets are based on 1990 levels, but Labor is now suggesting committing to reductions based on 2000 levels. Opposition environment spokesman Peter Garrett has said the change would make little difference. "It has got nothing to do with a fiddle, it's a commitment, something which we haven't got from Mr Howard; it's a target, something Mr Howard and Mr Turnbull are allergic to," he said. Mr Howard has said Labor's plan would hurt the economy. "It's a plan for reducing Australian jobs and not reducing Australian emissions," he said.

Reef plan

The bulk of the Labor reef funding package is \$146 million for a new water quality grants scheme. The money will come from the Natural Heritage Trust in the form of grants to landowners and sugar cane farmers who reduce run-off and sediment loss into the sea and the reef. "The Great Barrier Reef is Australia's greatest natural asset and we have a responsibility to the next generation of Australians to do whatever we can to properly preserve it," Mr Rudd said. He said climate change was already having an impact. "This also is of a critical nature when it comes to the quality of water in the areas surrounding the reef itself and it affects, therefore, the long term of reef eco-systems." Mr Rudd says he is confident the two can co-exist by encouraging farmers to improve land-management practices. Yesterday Mr Rudd toured a desalination plant on the Gold Coast to announce a plan for tax credits for water projects in a bid to "drought-proof" cities across the country. Storm water collection and water recycling projects would also be included. He said the projects approved for the funding would need to be carbon neutral. But Greens leader Bob Brown has said that encouraging desal plants

would harm Australia's coastline. Senator Brown has also said Mr Turnbull was more "modern thinking" than the Prime Minister on green issues. - *with AAP*

Garrett clarifies Labor climate stance

Labor would not expect developing countries to sign up to new binding carbon emissions agreements at the same time as developed ones, Peter Garrett said today. The revelation has prompted Prime Minister John Howard to warn that Labor was putting symbolism ahead of action on climate change.

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Speaking before the announcement of \$200 million to help the Great Barrier Reef deal with climate change, Mr Garrett, Labor's environment spokesman, said that since most of the heat caused in the atmosphere today was due to developed countries' emissions, it was right that they should lead the way in international agreements to reduce pollution. Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd backed Mr Garrett's approach. "If we are to get countries like China and India to accept targets themselves, then developed countries must act first," he told reporters. "Australia must show leadership. Australia should use its influence on the United States to get the United States onto the Kyoto program. "When that happens, China then has no excuse other than to act. "It is stunning, after all these years, that Mr Howard - anchored in old thinking, anchored in the past - refuses to accept this challenge of the future." However, Mr Rudd was forced to defend his refusal to commit to interim emission reductions beyond Labor's aim of reducing Australia's emissions by 60 per cent by 2050. He said Labor had commissioned economist Ross Garnaut to examine interim emission reduction targets and report by next June. "We will frame our interim targets once the Garnaut report is delivered," Mr Rudd said. Mr Garrett told ABC radio that developing countries would come on board as developed countries committed to reduce emissions. "In the past the developed countries, particularly Australia in this instance and the US which haven't bought into Kyoto at all, haven't sufficiently taken the lead to reduce their emissions to the extent that the developing countries have felt that they are ready to go," he said. "But that is the pathway we must establish." Mr Howard, who heard the comments on radio after earlier report in the Australian Financial Review, rang on to the ABC's AM program to warn Labor's approach would do nothing to help reduce gas emissions in the long term. "What is the point of having a situation where perhaps by the year 2030 two-thirds of the emissions are coming from countries that are not part of the international agreement," he said. "Mr Garrett (Labor's environment spokesman) is apparently willing to be part of that process but we are not because that would not be in Australia's interests." Mr Howard said the Coalition supported an international agreement that included all the major emitters, including China and India. He said the existing protocol contained too many exemptions. "Even if all of the countries that signed up to Kyoto had met their targets - which virtually none of them have - the fall in the world emissions on 1990 levels would be 41 versus 42 which is a difference of one per cent," he said. "That is a meaningless outcome because the Kyoto Protocol for all its symbolism has not in practice been effective. "That is the reason why Australia has not been willing to ratify it, although unlike most of the countries that have ratified it, we are probably going to meet our Kyoto target of 108 (per cent emissions reduction) over 1990 levels." Labor has set an aspirational target of a 60 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions on 2000 levels by 2050 and has commissioned academic Ross Garnaut to examine what the intermediate targets should look like. The Coalition wants Treasury to work on the economic impacts of a trading system before setting the target. Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull has noted before that even if developed countries reduced emissions by 100 per cent, an unlikely outcome, developing countries would have to reduce their emissions by 46 per cent to stabilise global emissions. Mr Turnbull reportedly argued in Cabinet before the election for the Coalition to ratify the Kyoto protocol because Australia was on target to reach its commitments. Mr Howard and Mr Turnbull have refused to confirm the story, with the Prime Minister saying he maintains confidence in his minister. **Source:** *The Australian*

PM slams Labor emissions plan

Prime Minister John Howard says Labor is proposing a lose-lose plan in signing on to a new global carbon emissions reduction agreement. Labor has yet to even release its plan, but Mr Howard today attacked it in a series of media interviews. Mr Howard was responding to opposition environment spokesman Peter Garrett, who told *The Australian Financial Review* a Labor Government would not consider it a deal breaker if developing nations did not sign on to a new Kyoto agreement from the outset. The non-inclusion of developing nations, such as China and India, is a key reason the Government has refused to ratify the current Kyoto agreement. Mr Howard says Labor is proposing a lose-lose plan. "It's a plan for reducing Australian jobs and not reducing Australian emissions," he told reporters in Sydney. Earlier, Mr Howard told ABC radio the Government was not arguing that the same rules should apply to both developing and developed countries in any new agreement. "But the idea of a new international agreement which did not apply to developing countries would be very damaging to Australia," he said. "We are willing to be part of an international agreement. We are willing to ratify ... we are willing to have an international agreement apply to Australia, but provided it also applies in an appropriate way to all of the world's major emitters. "Despite agreement with the coalition on many issues, Labor has cited climate change as a fundamental difference. Labor leader Kevin Rudd,

campaigning today on Green Island off Cairns for an announcement of measures designed to protect the Great Barrier reef, accused Mr Howard of being anchored in the past. He said Australia needed to take the lead on setting reduction targets so that big emitters in the developing world had no excuse not to adopt the same tough approach. "If we are to get countries like China and India to accept targets themselves, then developed countries must act first," he told reporters. "Australia must show leadership. Australia should use its influence on the United States to get the United States onto the Kyoto program.

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"When that happens, China then has no excuse other than to act." Mr Garrett said global warming was happening now and it was critical to limit temperature rises. "In the past the developed countries, particularly Australia in this instance and the US which haven't bought into Kyoto at all, haven't sufficiently taken the lead to reduce their emissions to the extent that the developing countries have felt that they are ready to go," he told ABC Radio. "But that is the pathway we must establish." Greens leader Bob Brown suggested Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull was better attuned to the issue than Mr Howard. Weekend media reports claimed that Mr Turnbull was rebuffed by cabinet when he recommended the Government sign up to Kyoto. "Malcolm Turnbull is a very intelligent member of the cabinet. He's thinking much more 21st century," Mr Brown told ABC radio. "It has caused stress within the cabinet but it points to (the) Howard of date, (what) the Howard thinking is and how much we need new thinking on the treasury benches and in the Senate in Australia after November 24."

PM urged to change tactics

Senior Liberals fear John Howard's focus on defending his record is hurting the Coalition and creating tension within its campaign, putting the Government on the back foot as it enters the third week. Still trailing in the opinion polls, some Liberals are blaming the Prime Minister's fixation with the past and the Coalition's conflicting messages for neutralising some good days for the Government's campaign. Liberal insiders are concerned that voters are being confused by "enthusiastic amateurs" putting their own guerilla campaign advertising and messages on YouTube and other websites. The concerns have been fuelled by Mr Howard's defeat in last week's leaders' debate, the Coalition's poor showing in last week's Newspoll and Mr Howard's admission that Liberal advertising in 2004 had promised to keep interest rates at record lows. The weekend revelation that Malcolm Turnbull argued unsuccessfully in cabinet for the Government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, despite Mr Howard's longstanding opposition to the global climate change pact, has exposed the Coalition tensions. Deputy Prime Minister Mark Vaile yesterday called for "absolute cabinet solidarity". "Obviously some people are less disciplined than others in these matters, but it's a central tenet of any government that's managing this country that cabinet discussions remain inside of cabinet," Mr Vaile said, amid claims Mr Turnbull leaked details of his cabinet push for Kyoto in a bid to save his seat of Wentworth in Sydney's east. The Coalition strategy this week is to link its record on job creation and commitment to skills training with the negative image and "economic risk" of having union officials dominate a Rudd Labor government. As more public polling points to a clear Labor victory on November 24, with the ALP reversing its losing position in key NSW marginal seats from the 2004 election, senior Liberals are pressing for a "clear message" from Mr Howard with more emphasis on the future. According to a Galaxy poll published in today's The Daily Telegraph in Sydney, Labor has lifted its primary vote in the NSW seats of Dobell, Lindsay, Paterson and Robertson from 37 per cent in 2004 to 46 per cent last weekend as the Coalition's dropped from 49.6 per cent to 42 per cent. On a two-party-preferred basis, the margin for Labor in the seats is 54 per cent to 46 per cent. Although the margin in these electorates, based on a survey of 800 people, is half the margin in the latest national Newspoll survey, the ALP would win these vulnerable seats if the poll results were repeated on November 24. A poll in The Canberra Times on Saturday also showed Labor comfortably winning the bellwether NSW seat of Eden-Monaro. The national Newspoll survey, published in The Australian last Tuesday, gave Labor a two-party-preferred lead of 58 per cent to 42 per cent. There are criticisms within the Liberal camp about the extent Mr Howard seeks the advice of his former chief of staff, Grahame Morris, and that Mr Howard appears to be running his own marginal seat campaign against Labor's Maxine McKew in his Sydney electorate of Bennelong. Mr Morris, who resigned as Mr Howard's chief of staff 10 years ago, gave Mr Howard some advice before the televised leaders' debate last week. Kevin Rudd won the debate and gave Labor crucial political momentum at the beginning of last week. But despite the concerns in the Liberal camp, senior party members still believe the Coalition can win the election in the four weeks left in the campaign if the Coalition builds on public concern about union domination of the Labor Party and links the fears with "economic risk" and poor management. The Liberals have been running advertising that links former Labor officials, now ministers in state Labor governments, with failures in public hospitals and transport. Last night, the Prime Minister struck out with a YouTube message on plans for increased skills training for 60,000 young people and quoted figures showing variable housing mortgage interest rates were still at 30-year lows.

Asked on the Nine Network's Sunday program about the Coalition's 2004 promise to keep interest rates at record lows, and what voters would believe in this campaign, Mr Howard said: "They were entitled to believe that we would do a better job at keeping interest rates down than what the Labor Party would do, and they did. "And they were right. And the same will apply in the future," Mr Howard said. Campaigning in Brisbane, Kevin Rudd accused Mr Howard of breaking his promise and his word on interest rates. "Mr Howard out of his own mouth made a promise to the Australian people before the last election on interest rates, which he knew he could not keep, which he did not keep, and which has flowed through to all those Australian households who are now paying the price in terms of their monthly mortgage repayments," the Opposition Leader said.

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Mr Howard responded last night by saying interest rates, for variable home mortgage rates, were still at their lowest for 30 years. Mr Howard said "let's get real" and talk about what people pay for their mortgages, not the official cash rate. Mr Howard also tried to get the emphasis of the economic debate on to jobs and skills training, defending his record on apprenticeships.

ALP pours money into water

Labor will use \$1 billion in tax breaks and cash grants to encourage up to \$10 billion worth of investment in desalination and water recycling in a pitch to urban dwellers left out of the Howard Government's water policy. Kevin Rudd yesterday accused the Howard Government of going missing on urban water security and also attacked poor state government water planning. The Opposition Leader said he would provide national leadership on water, contrasting his position to that of Peter Costello, who said earlier this year that the commonwealth had no role to play in water supply. "That's simply not helpful," Mr Rudd said after touring a \$1.2 billion desalination plant under construction at Tugun, on the southern Gold Coast. "The nation wants governments - national and state - to co-operate to bring about water security." Under Labor's plan, the commonwealth would spend \$1 billion on direct grants of up to \$100 million to state and local governments working on desalination and other water projects such as wastewater recycling and storm water harvesting. Private companies involved in public-private partnerships would also be eligible through the provision of tax credits to the value of 10 per cent of their investment. "This will be the single largest national government investment in urban water in this country's history," Mr Rudd said. "These are expensive projects. They are necessary projects for the future to make sure that we've got water security for Australia's major urban centres." He said the money would be distributed by Infrastructure Australia - the agency proposed by Labor to assess and prioritise infrastructure projects. The body, to include government and private sector experts, would assess applications for projects based on value-for-money and the level to which they would make a difference to existing water supplies. Applications would be opened after the election of a Labor government and successful projects announced in mid-2009. In a clear pitch to the Greens, all water projects would have to be carbon neutral, either through the use of energy generated by renewable sources or by the purchase of carbon offsets. Mr Rudd, who was joined yesterday by deputy leader Julia Gillard, said Labor had provided bipartisan support for the Howard Government's massive \$10 billion plan to improve water flows in the Murray-Darling Basin. Security of urban water supplies was the huge missing element of water policy, he said. And Mr Rudd, often criticised by the Government for being involved in a Queensland government decision to scrap a planned dam when he worked for former premier Wayne Goss in 1989, said he would not defend state governments for poor planning on water. "State and territory governments have obviously run into various projects over time, it's true," Mr Rudd said. "The federal Government has said, 'It's your problem, not ours'." But with climate change clearly affecting the level of rainfall and the amount of water flowing into dams, the commonwealth needed to show leadership in the development of new technologies to secure water supply. "A significant increase in the capacity and scale of Australia's urban water infrastructure is the only way to secure the water supply for our major cities and growth corridors," Mr Rudd said. South Australia's Labor Government yesterday welcomed Mr Rudd's initiative. But Premier Mike Rann is yet to respond to John Howard's challenge to provide costings for a proposed water desalination project for Adelaide so the federal Government can support it financially. In a statement yesterday, Mr Rann commended Mr Rudd's recent commitment of \$160 million for an additional South Australian desalination plant, planned for the upper Spencer Gulf region, to back the expansion of BHP Billiton's giant copper, gold and uranium mine at Olympic Dam. A federal Labor government would spend \$8 million a year for five years to create two new centres of excellence in desalination in Perth and Brisbane to ensure the nation took a role in desalination technology. The new Labor policy adds to previous policies, including a \$250 million plan to repair leaky pipes and \$250 million to provide rebates of up to \$500 for 500,000 home owners to install rainwater tanks or grey-water systems.

The Australian

Call to cut toxic run-off to reef

An alliance of canegrowers, graziers and conservationists wants the next federal government to help it dramatically cut the stream of toxic sludge that drains into the Great Barrier Reef each year. After years of debate between farmers and green groups about the effect of agricultural run-off, the combatants have joined

forces to lobby Labor and the Coalition to provide \$300 million in funding over five years for their plan of attack. The groups want to halve the nutrient load reaching the \$7-billion-a-year tourist asset and cut sediments by 20 per cent. Under the plan farmers would receive part payments upon completion of works undertaken to reduce agricultural run-off. Measures that would be rewarded under the plan include the construction of sediment traps and the application of new monitoring technologies so only the required amount of water and fertiliser was used on a crop. "We are hoping for a substantial contribution from government," said Queensland Farmers Federation chief executive John Cherry. "But farmers are willing to put hundreds of millions of dollars into this as well."

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Chief executive of the Mackay Whitsundays Natural Resource Management Group and former head of CSIRO's water flagship Colin Creighton said about \$1million was spent each year on dealing with nutrient runoff. "That is not enough; it would take 20 or 30 years at the current rate of investment to control it," he said. A return-on-investment analysis undertaken by Mr Creighton based on 10 years of research shows a \$220 million investment by government for incentives would lead to a \$400 million investment by farmers.

Rudd pledges \$200m to reef

A Labor government will implement a \$200 million environmental plan designed to protect the Great Barrier Reef from climate change and declining water quality. Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd unveiled the policy while visiting the reef today, describing it as the largest-ever single financial contribution to help secure the future of the reef, one of Australia's best-known tourist attractions. The bulk of the funding package is \$146 million for a new water quality grants scheme. Mr Rudd said the climate change initiative would benefit the reef, local landholders and farmers, and the tourism and fishing industries dependent on the reef. The money will come from the Natural Heritage Trust in the form of grants to landowners who reduce run-off and sediment loss into the sea and the reef. "The Great Barrier Reef is Australia's greatest natural asset and we have a responsibility to the next generation of Australians to do whatever we can to properly preserve it," Mr Rudd said. He said climate change was already having an impact on the reef which was also under threat from sediment and nutrient run-off from farming activity in the area, predominantly sugar cane. "This also is of a critical nature when it comes to the quality of water in the areas surrounding the reef itself and it affects, therefore, the long term of reef eco-systems." Mr Rudd says he is confident the two can co-exist by encouraging farmers to improve land-management practices. Mr Rudd said a newly released United Nations environment report backed up Labor's pledge to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. The fourth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4), published by the UN Environment Program, says humanity is poised to bequeath a ravaged planet to future generations. The report, compiled by 390 experts from more than two decades of data, points to a "systematic destruction" of natural and nature-based resources. Mr Rudd said the report "made it even more important for us to act". "Its contents make for sobering reading for us all," he told journalists at a school in Perth. Mr Rudd said the report found global average temperatures had risen 0.74 degrees celsius over the past century and were forecast to rise between 1.8 and four degrees by 2100. It found climate change might further exacerbate the loss of biodiversity, and the degradation of land, soil, forests, fresh water and oceans. "When the UN global environmental report talks about the absolute need for global cooperation to act effectively on the environment and climate change, a core part of that cooperation lies through the Kyoto framework," Mr Rudd said. He said even Business Council of Australia president Michael Chaney now says the government should have ratified the Kyoto Protocol. "We say Australia should have ratified Kyoto, and if we are elected to form the next government of Australia we will ratify Kyoto." Labor environment spokesman Peter Garrett, with Mr Rudd at a school in Perth to inject an extra \$150 million into a program giving solar panels and water tanks to schools, said Australia should build a solar nation. "Today's GEO-4 outlook report emphasises again how critical it is for us to start delivering climate change solutions for this country," Mr Garrett said.

Splash and grab

Adelaide residents were not happy in June when they were restricted to watering their gardens with buckets and cans. Garden-lovers gave full vent to their anger by besieging talkback radio. But the restrictions, brought in under a Murray-Darling Basin contingency plan, should have been more severe. The South Australian Government, along with NSW and Victoria, agreed that "unless there are significant inflows into the storages, all outside water use for domestic purposes should be prohibited from July 1, 2007". Not only were there no significant inflows in September but Murray River flows across the border fell to the lowest level ever. Yet SA Premier Mike Rann announced that a very slight improvement in expected rainfalls in the Adelaide Hills meant domestic water restrictions would be eased this month, allowing for drippers and hand-held hose watering one day a week. "The slight easing of restrictions does not indicate an improvement in our overall outlook," Rann noted. Once again politics triumphed over good water management. Despite the agreement to ban outdoor use of water along the Murray, the reality is a patchwork of restrictions. Albury, on the NSW side of the Murray, adheres to the ban. But further downstream at Wentworth, hand-held trigger hoses can be used for two hours

twice a week. On the other side of the river it is one hour, twice a week. From Albury to Adelaide, everyone takes water from the same river, the Murray, where the storages are at a record low of 23 per cent. Last week, the first biennial water assessment of progress under the National Water Initiative was released. It criticised urban water managers for failing to plan for reliable supplies. The assessment was undertaken by the National Water Commission. Commission chief Ken Matthews says there is great confusion over water restrictions, and there is "a growing sense that they are inappropriate and inequitable and probably inefficient, and all of that is true". Restrictions vary between cities and states. "If you talk to your aunt in another city and say, we are on level 3, she has no idea what you mean," Matthews says.

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Under Sydney's level 3 restrictions you can water morning and evening twice a week; under Melbourne's level 3a, you can only water for two hours in the morning twice a week, while over in Adelaide, which is under enhanced level 3 restrictions, it is once a week for three hours. The commission is now reviewing state restrictions. "I hear people saying we will have water restrictions for ever in Australia and that isn't my vision of an effectively managed water sector," Matthews says. "We need to get to a position where restrictions are a rare and exceptional event." Matthews wants a national set of water restrictions, where level 1 means saving 10 per cent of water; level 2 saving 20 per cent; and so on. He wants a national benchmark of going to level 4 restrictions only once in 50 years. "Once you have established that, then it is very easy to measure the performance of your water utility, of your state government. We have national minimum standards in education, and other areas, what about water?" Matthews asks. Jolyon Burnett is the chief executive of Irrigation Australia. He argues the water restrictions that have been in place for several years are only designed for a short-term drought response. "It is inappropriate that they continue to be used when clearly we are either facing a significant shift in climate patterns, or global climate change. It is time to move to something that is actually capable of being sustained in the long term, permanent water conservation measures." There is no doubt the shortage has caught out most water utilities. In the past year, there has been, in the words of the commission, a mad scramble to invest in water infrastructure. Sydney, Melbourne and the Gold Coast have committed to desalination plants, while Adelaide is considering one. Perth is building a second desalination plant, and Brisbane is introducing indirect potable reuse of water. Burnett argues water restrictions are entrenching bad behaviour and worst practice. "Irrigation should not be time-based. It should be based on the requirements of the plant, and this idea that people get trained to water twice a week for two hours regardless, is really bad practice." He thinks water authorities should be looking longer term, to a future where gardeners use recycled rather than drinking water, and rely on technology such as soil-moisture sensors and local climate information to judge their water needs. And he is frustrated by the politics of water restrictions, such as the recent decision in Adelaide. "This is clearly a political process and it shouldn't be. This should be about the efficient use of water and beginning to build in market signals and incentives to get us to where we want to be in five or 10 years. "But it is the same in Melbourne where they were due to go to level 4, the trigger level had been reached, but after lobbying they went to 3a. This is absolute stupidity." Burnett also argues there is very little science behind the restrictions. Sydney Water used to say that 40 per cent of water was used outside. "We did a study with the Co-operative Research Centre for irrigation futures. For the first time in Sydney we separately metered outdoor use and indoor water use. Over the four months at the peak of summer the average outdoor use was 30 per cent. If you spread that over the year there is no way it can be 40 per cent." Only in Western Australia is there a science-based system. There the aim is to have to adopt the most severe restrictions only for a once-in-50-year event. Ben Jarvis is the manager of water efficiency with WA's Water Corporation. Perth was the first capital city to move to water restrictions, in September 2001, when sprinklers were permitted twice a week, and hosing any time. This month, Perth has moved to permanent water efficiency measures. "The latest figures are that 91 per cent of people support the water efficiency measures," Jarvis says. "The two days a week are here to stay." The initial restrictions were based on local trials that showed that gardens could survive on two watering days a week, even through Perth's dry summers. Jarvis says the big difference between Perth and the eastern states is that "we do work very closely with the garden industry reference group". Perth is Australia's first climate change city. Its rainfall, and inflow into its dams, has experienced two downward steps. Between 1911 and 1974 inflow averaged 338 gegalitres. Between 1975 and 1996 it dropped to 177 GL, and between 1997 and 2005 it dropped further to 114 GL, one-third of its earlier level. Perth has been relying on underground water for half its supply, and now has a desalination plant supplying 17 per cent of the city's water. Jarvis says in "green industries" nurseries, turf suppliers, irrigation companies and landscapers "realise that it is climate change, it is here to stay, so if they are going to have a future they need to be as careful as possible with their water usage and to encourage their customers to be that way". The imposition of water restrictions in the eastern states has resulted in the loss of at least 6000 full-time jobs in the green industries. But Burnett says Perth's science-based approach has led to an expansion of the industry, "at the same time as similar per capita water savings have been achieved". WA sat down with industry well in advance, worked through a series of measures

that has some science to them. They give a rebate on soil-moisture monitors and they publicise businesses that have been through accredited training for water saving. "They are working with industry and they are achieving similar (water) savings and industry is prospering. It is very frustrating to see them dragging the chain on the eastern seaboard." Mike Young is professor of water economics and management at Adelaide University. In defence of his city, he points out it has a dry Mediterranean climate and if the state Government had not loosened restrictions "a huge number of gardens would have died, lots of hedgerows, urban trees would die. It is very different to Brisbane and Sydney where there is a summer rainfall". Adelaide, on average, gets less than half Sydney's rain, but it has a strong culture of backyard fruit and vegetable production.

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"It has enabled people to put their gardens on survival watering so they don't lose those assets of immense value," Young says. He argues there should be a more consistent system "built around trade-offs in value and economic importance. There needs to be a mechanism that gets the prices right everywhere and assesses the consequences of the damages everywhere. That includes damages to household gardens as well as to irrigation areas and to the environment." He would like to see water trading, enabling city gardeners to compete with irrigators for water. "In many cases these gardens are worth thousands of dollars, and small amounts of water would make a huge difference." Young points out that all the states have signed off on the National Water Initiative, which includes a commitment to pricing water at full cost. "Instead we are playing rebate games," Young says. "We are bribing people to save water because we are not prepared to put the price up and let the market sort it out. It is in direct violation of the NWI." An economic analysis would take in the value of gardens to local food production, and real estate. It would put business and households on the same footing. And it would also take into account the health benefits, and costs. "My physio is telling me that she is making a fortune out of bucketing water," Young laughs. "Carrying buckets around is not good for backs when they are older than about 30, I think."

Drought clips waterbirds' wings

There is not a bird in sight at Australia's world-renowned waterbird breeding ground, the Macquarie Marshes. "In the 1980s we averaged 20,000 waterbirds from more than 20 species," said University of NSW state, river and waterbird expert Richard Kingsford, who on Friday completed his annual survey of waterbirds. "In the 1990s that dropped to 5000 from 13 species and since 2000 we have averaged 600 from nine species. But this year we did not find a single bird. It was heartbreaking." The state of the Macquarie Marshes, north of Dubbo in central NSW, provides a dire illustration of the devastating effects drought is having on the environment of the Murray-Darling Basin. Australia's waterbird population is in dramatic decline due to the drought and years of regulated river operations. An annual aerial survey of the state of the bird life across eastern Australia details a barren and waterless environment with critically low waterbird numbers in many parts of the basin. River Red Gums are "dropping like flies", and the Macquarie Marshes, where Professor Kingsford just completed his latest waterbird survey, is a disaster. "This is my 22nd year involved in the survey, and I have never seen it this bad," he told The Australian. "This will be the lowest count ever of waterbirds in 25 years." The effect of the arid state of the Murray-Darling Basin on irrigators and communities along the river system had received significant attention. But the plight of the environment and its plant and animal inhabitants had been underplayed, Professor Kingsford said. This is the seventh year there will be no breeding event in Macquarie Marshes, a wetland unique to Australia because of its large colonies of breeding ibis and egrets. The site is on the Ramsar List of internationally important wetlands. There is a certain amount of resilience in wetland systems because the animals and plants are used to wet and dry periods. But too much water is being taken from the system for dams and irrigation, and reform is too slow compared with the pace of deterioration, Professor Kingsford said. He said the saving grace this year was the big flood that went into Lake Eyre in outback South Australia and filled lakes along the way. There is some water and therefore some waterbirds in a few places, such as lakes Torquinnie and Mumbleberry, near Birdsville.

Cosgrove land plan in 'grab for cash'

A conservation group fronted by retired Australian Defence Force chief Peter Cosgrove and his wife Lynne has been accused by the Queensland Government of a "shameless and immoral" grab for taxpayer money to fund a scheme to save parts of the Daintree rainforest. The Australian Rainforest Foundation - which uses state and commonwealth grants to buy and preserve privately owned blocks in the region - is seeking \$1.3 million in compensation to hand over "high-conservation" land to the neighbouring Daintree National Park. Queensland Environment Minister Andrew McNamara yesterday said the ARF should just give the land to the national park instead of attempting to "double dip" into taxpayer monies to improve its bottom line. "The foundation now wants taxpayers to pay again for the same properties through this immoral compensation claim," he told The Australian. "This makes a joke of the Australian Rainforest Foundation's purported conservation philosophy, and puts at risk protection of Daintree rainforest." The land, neighbouring the World Heritage-listed national

park, is among more than 800 titles opened up for tourism and housing in the 1970s. Since 2002, the ARF has received more than \$6 million in state and commonwealth funds to buy 171ha of land in the Daintree region. The ARF operates under a "revolving land" funding agreement, in which it buys and then merges neighbouring freehold blocks, with the aim of cutting development by reducing the number of owners and putting conservation covenants on the consolidated titles. The not-for-profit organisation, whose patron is Ms Cosgrove and public face of donor drives is General Cosgrove, then resells the larger blocks to raise further funding to buy more land. But the scheme hit a snag last year when Douglas Shire Council banned housing approvals under new zoning laws that covered most of the ARF's 26 freehold titles and slashed their value. The ARF came under attack by locals, the council and state Government in August when it forged ahead with development applications on 20 titles.

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It is now seeking \$1.3 million for "lost development rights", under a \$10 million state government-funded scheme to compensate landowners unable to build houses. The ARF says it has no intention of challenging the ban, but is seeking compensation because their land is worth less under the new zoning. ARF chief executive Roger Phillips said the organisation had been given government "seed money" that was intended to create a growing fund to preserve freehold land. "This revolving land scheme is what the Government wanted us to do, because it creates an on-going source of revenue and reduces development by cutting the number of titles and securing conservation covenants on the merged blocks we put up for sale," he said. "We can't just give away the land, we are not allowed under the agreements." The ARF and Queensland Government have been in negotiations for almost a year to resolve the impasse. Douglas Shire Council Mayor Mike Berwick also attacked the ARF compensation bid and said the "revolving land" scheme was flawed because only a few of the group's blocks were adjoining and they could not be merged. Mr Berwick said some landowners were outraged at the ARF's compensation claim after selling their properties to the ARF for token amounts. "The ARF are more in the real estate business than the conservation business," he said. **Am I vindicated I have been open as never trusting Cosgrove.**

Dioxin limits too lenient: scientists

Conditions placed on the Tasmanian pulp mill by Malcolm Turnbull are "dangerous" and include dioxin limits three times less stringent than world's best practice, scientists say. Oil industry contamination modeller Andrew Wadsley told The Australian maximum dioxin limits set by Mr Turnbull were three times less rigorous than levels achieved by mills in Sweden, Canada and Maryvale in Victoria. And former CSIRO chief scientist Stuart Godfrey described as "very dangerous" Mr Turnbull's decision to allow Gunns to build the mill, north of Launceston, before studies were done to show how its effluent would disperse in Bass Strait. When Mr Turnbull announced his decision on October 4, he promised: "Maximum dioxin levels in the effluent discharged from the mill will be required to be almost four times more stringent than world's best practice." This maximum was set at 3.4 picograms per litre, with a "trigger" level of 2pg. Dr Wadsley, adjunct associate professor at Curtin University, said the 3.4pg limit was three times less stringent than the dioxin level of 1pg emitted by similar bleached kraft pulp mills. "Most of the mills in British Columbia and Quebec and all of the Swedish mills are below 1pg," he said. He said Mr Turnbull's 850pg a kilogram limit for dioxins and other toxic substances in sediments was totally inadequate and based on a limit applied in significantly different conditions in Canada. "There is absolutely no scientific justification that the level of 850pg is appropriate for Bass Strait." Due to the far lower rate of organic carbon in Bass Strait sediment, he believed this limit should be no more than 35pg. "If you had 850pg per kilo in Bass Strait sediment and flathead were browsing on it, their levels of dioxin would exceed safe levels for consumption of fish in Australian," he said. "It is a way, way too high." Mr Turnbull's department confirmed the maximum level of 3.4pg for effluent had been suggested by Gunns. "That was the rate Gunns claimed they could deliver at and we held them to that," a spokesman said. The 3.4pg maximum was, however, almost four times as stringent as "world's best practice regulation", with limits of 13pg in Europe and the US, he said. Mr Turnbull would not comment, but his office asked Chief Scientist Jim Peacock to respond. Dr Peacock confirmed that Gunns had been allowed a maximum dioxin limit well above dioxin levels produced by similar mills overseas. However, his "expectation" was the Gunns mill would operate well below 2pg, above which action would be needed. Dr Godfrey, an oceanographer with 38 years' experience, was successful in persuading Mr Turnbull to order a new hydrodynamic study to predict what would happen to the 64,000 tonnes of effluent to be released into Bass Strait each day. However, Mr Turnbull decided construction of the mill could go ahead while this modelling, likely to take 12 months, was completed. Dr Godfrey said this raised serious concerns. "It is obviously a very dangerous thing to do," he said. If the modelling showed further treatment of the effluent was needed, Australians would have to hope the minister of the day had the fortitude to prevent the mill operating until such changes were made, whatever the cost to Gunns.

No green credit

The PM is being punished for rejecting Kyoto symbolism

The revelation on Saturday that Malcolm Turnbull urged John Howard to sign the Kyoto Protocol six weeks ago has put the spotlight again both on the much-misunderstood agreement and on the Government's inexperienced Environment Minister. As Glenn Milne observes on these pages today, whoever was responsible for the cabinet leak, the net effect has been to reinforce Mr Turnbull's impotence on climate change. His clumsy handling of the issue once the story broke has again drawn attention to his political inexperience. Mr Turnbull has to learn fast if he is to win the confidence of his colleagues and make himself a serious future contender for the leadership role he covets. On one reading, the leaked cabinet proposal looks like a bid to shore up Mr Turnbull's green credentials with his marginal electorate, where many voters are already disillusioned that he didn't intervene to prevent a pulp mill in the Tamar Valley.

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But the real effect was to expose Mr Turnbull as a political neophyte. Signing Kyoto six weeks before an election would have made no more difference to Mr Howard's or Mr Turnbull's re-election prospects than it would have made to saving the planet. Having said that, as Matthew Warren writes in his Greenchip column in today's *The Australian*, while Kyoto has done almost nothing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it is important in symbolic terms, not least with Australian voters. Mr Howard always refused to sign Kyoto because he said that it would cost Australia jobs and growth. Having met our Kyoto targets with no noticeable damage to the Australian economy, that argument sounds hollow. The nation and the Government might as well have collected the brownie points. It is infuriating that European countries take the high ground by lecturing Australia, even threatening punitive action for not having ratified Kyoto, when Australia is going to meet its targets and almost all of them are not. Moreover, Mr Howard has allowed Kevin Rudd to trumpet the fact that he will sign Kyoto as a point of difference and many voters will reward him for this purely symbolic gesture. Mr Howard has been right to consistently point out that only an agreement that includes all the major emitters, preferably a global one, has any chance of tackling the reductions that have to be made. He can take considerable credit for his lobbying at the Sydney APEC meeting that brought China and the US closer to agreeing to emissions reductions than they have gone before. It is true that just one initiative under the Australian Government's groundbreaking Global Initiative on Forests and Climate in the peat land forests in Indonesia's Kalimantan region has the potential to reduce greenhouse gases by a greater amount than Australia's total annual emissions. But Mr Howard gets no credit because, for so many voters, not signing Kyoto outweighs everything else. In more ways than one, in this election, Mr Howard is belatedly discovering the potent power of symbols.

Kyoto causes tight ship to leak

If Malcolm Turnbull sneaks off and signs Kyoto, does that mean we will be saved from Peter Costello's tsunami? asks Samantha Maiden. The fear factor is kicking in and - for some ministers - it's already a case of abandon ship and every man for himself. And we're not just talking about stripping John Howard from their campaign material. Costello's trying to frighten voters with predictions of recessions and economic tsunamis. Turnbull is giving us the vision thing - which is terrific except for the fact that it's not one endorsed by cabinet. Revelations the millionaire member for Wentworth argued in cabinet that Howard should bite the bullet and sign the Kyoto Protocol suggest a hitherto unheard-of level of dissident behaviour. What's worse, it leaked out of one of the tightest cabinets anyone can remember. Over the weekend, Howard repeatedly refused to deny a full and frank discussion on Kyoto, declaring "full confidence" in his Environment Minister. Turnbull pretty much confirmed the story by explaining it was not his job to express personal opinions. "I am the minister and it's my job to explain and expound the Government's policy," he said. Turnbull appears to be building a strategy based on a reworking of the Whitlam classic: "God Save Wentworth. Because Nothing Will Save the Howard Government". "He's not fooling anyone with his faux outrage over the leak," spat one minister. "It's the worst cabinet leak in 11 years. "He's now got everyone talking about an issue that's a negative for the Government." Turnbull could also be abandoning a ship that hasn't quite sunk yet. Party polling in Queensland suggests the Coalition remains competitive in many of the seats it holds. Liberal pollster Crosby Textor detected a lift in the primary vote for the Coalition late last week, despite an imminent interest rate rise. A similar lift was detected after Costello's \$34 billion tax package during the first week of the campaign. Turnbull remains under pressure in Wentworth, a seat he holds by a margin of just 2.5 per cent. Gently stoking Turnbull's paranoia, leaked Labor polling suggests the result is still too close to call. To be fair, Turnbull's point - that Australia will meet its Kyoto target anyway and it wouldn't impose any burden Canberra hasn't committed to already - remains entirely reasonable. But it was hardly surprising that Kevin Rudd leapt on "this most significant development". The other significant development is the Liberal Party is starting to sound like the Labor Party, sniping at upstarts like Turnbull - just like they did with Rudd - who they may one day have to learn to love, perhaps sooner rather than later.

Climate changes the income mix for farmers

Within a decade many NSW farmers will only be getting half their income from traditional agricultural sources, with the rest coming from carbon credits, green power generation and environmental stewardship payments, the state's Natural Resources Commissioner says. John Williams told a landscape conference in Tamworth on Saturday that the farm of the future will be as much about conservation as it will be about growing food and fibre. He predicts farmers will also have to change their agricultural product mix because of climate change. Farmers would be growing more drought-tolerant natives such as blue mallee for biofuels. Dr Williams said these shifts in farming "will certainly happen in the next five to 10 years". Farmers would be better placed to stay on the land and cope with climate change, he said, because they would have diverse income streams that were more resilient to a hotter, drier climate.

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They would be paid by power utilities, polluting manufacturers and water companies for hosting wind farm turbines, locking carbon in native vegetation and preserving wetlands. Dr Williams said the farm of the future would need a trading scheme that ensured the price of carbon was at least \$25/t. Land also needed to be properly managed to ensure conservation, and governments should be paying farmers for environmental services, he said. "You can't just have people walking off [the land]." Dr Williams stressed farmers were already managing the landscape much better. "I think [agriculture] has got a good future provided we don't sit on our hands any longer." SOURCE: *Sydney Morning Herald*, a Fairfax Media publication.

Labor to fund cane farmers reef protection work

Labor has unveiled a \$200-million plan to help farmers on the Queensland coast to improve on-farm practices that will help protect the Great Barrier Reef from climate change and declining water quality. The plan includes \$146m in a new Water Quality Grants Scheme, funded out the Government's existing Natural Heritage Trust program. The money will provide matching grants to landowners and managers in reef catchments for land management practices, which improve farm productivity and reduce loss of nutrients and sediments. Labor says excessive nutrients, pesticides and sediments from the run-off are degrading inshore reefs and making the system vulnerable to the impact of climate change. The grants program will be delivered in partnership with peak industry groups and existing regional natural resource management groups. Labor says its plan will benefit both the reef, local landholders and farmers, as well as the tourism and fishing industries dependent on the Reef. Labor's rescue plan covers the whole reef catchment area, stretching from Bundaberg to Cape York. SOURCE: *Queensland Country Life*, weekly rural newspaper, posting breaking news updates on *FarmOnline*.

Nats campaign on Labor's Green ties

The Nationals are campaigning hard on Labor's preference deal with the Greens, saying they could cost regional Australia's resources boom and entire agricultural industries. Nationals Leader Mark Vaile is demanding Labor Leader Kevin Rudd "come clean" on the detail of the preference deal, because "the Greens are not going to give Labor their preferences for nothing". "People in Gladstone, Mackay and Rockhampton have every right to fear that Kevin Rudd and Labor will secretly sell them out by agreeing to the Greens' policy on coal mining," Mr Vaile said. And Nationals Senators Barnaby Joyce and Ron Boswell are also accusing the Greens, Democrats and Labor of entering into a coalition agreement in a bid to regain control of the Senate. Sen Boswell said the joint ads between the three parties proved that they closely shared political philosophies and goals. "This handcuffs Labor and the radical Greens into a coalition," he said. "The joint advertising proves that Labor will sign up with a minority, far left environmentalist group, in order to get into government." Sen Boswell pointed to the Greens policies against intensive agriculture as an example of their "extremism". SOURCE: National rural news updated daily on *FarmOnline*.

Land clearing triggers hotter droughts

New scientific research has shown that clearing native vegetation has made recent Australian droughts hotter. Dr Clive McAlpine, of the University of Queensland's Centre for Remote Sensing and Spatial Information Science, and Jozef Syktus, principal scientist in the Queensland Natural Resources and Water Department, have headed the study, which applied a CSIRO climate model with satellite data. The results showed that 150 years of land clearing have added significantly to the warming and drying of eastern Australia. "Our work shows that the 2002-03 El Nino drought in eastern Australia was on average two degrees Centigrade hotter because of vegetation clearing," Dr McAlpine said. "Based on this research, it would be fair to say that the current drought has been made worse by past clearing of native vegetation. "Our findings highlight that it is too simplistic to attribute climate change purely to greenhouse gases. "Protection and restoration of Australia's native vegetation needs to be a critical consideration in mitigating climate change." Co-authors are Dr Hamish McGowan, Associate Professor Stuart Phinn and Dr Ravinesh Deo – all of UQ – Dr Peter Lawrence of the University of Colorado and Dr Ian Watterson of CSIRO. The researchers found that mean summer rainfall decreased by between 4pc and 12pc in eastern Australia, and by 4pc and 8pc in southwest Western Australia. These were the

regions of most extensive historical clearing. "Consistent with actual climate trends, eastern Australia was between 0.4 degrees Centigrade and two degrees Centigrade warmer, and southwest Western Australia was between 0.4 degrees and 0.8 degrees warmer," Dr McAlpine said. "Native vegetation moderates climate fluctuations, and this has important, largely unrecognised consequences for agriculture and stressed land and water resources." Australian native vegetation holds more moisture that subsequently evaporates and recycles back as rainfall. It also reflects into space less short wave solar radiation than broad acre crops and improved pastures, and this process keeps the surface temperature cooler and aids cloud formation.

The Australian Garrett's blunder on Kyoto

Peter Garrett's political credentials were in tatters last night after Kevin Rudd forced his environment spokesman to issue a humiliating clarification of Labor's greenhouse gas policy.

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The backdown came after a Labor crisis meeting, which followed a day of sustained assault by John Howard and senior ministers on Mr Garrett's approach to a new post-Kyoto climate accord. Mr Garrett started the day by committing a Labor government to signing a new global agreement on greenhouse gas emissions targets that might not include developing nations, such as China and India. Last night, Mr Garrett issued a statement, reversing his position. The Opposition Leader had initially endorsed Mr Garrett's statement, drawing fire from senior government ministers, who accused Labor of destroying Australia's position on climate change and threatening jobs. The Prime Minister said Mr Garrett's commitment, in an interview with *The Australian Financial Review* and on ABC radio, was against Australia's interests and would put Australian jobs at risk. "We can't have a situation where Australian industry is bound to take steps to curb greenhouse gas emissions, but competitive countries like China are not bound," Mr Howard said. "Mr Garrett doesn't have a plan to cut emissions, he has a plan to cut Australian jobs." Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said committing to any new deal without the explicit support of developing countries was "absurd". "You cannot be the government of Australia and go into negotiations saying 'developing countries don't have to make a contribution, we'll sign the agreement anyway' and think you are going to do something to solve this problem of greenhouse gas emissions," he said. At a press conference in Cairns yesterday morning, where Mr Rudd and Mr Garrett unveiled a \$200 million plan to protect the Great Barrier Reef, both men repeated the commitment. Mr Rudd said countries such as Australia should be prepared to take the lead on signing new targets under a new international agreement so that big emitters in the developing world had no excuse not to adopt the same tough approach. "We believe that leadership must come first from the developed economies, including Australia and the United States, and then countries and economies like China have nowhere to go," Mr Rudd said. Earlier, Mr Garrett said on ABC radio that developed nations should make commitments at the Bali conference in December on climate change without waiting for developing countries to do so, and said Australia should ratify the Kyoto Protocol. While it is Labor policy to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, Labor had also supported moves, such as the Asia-Pacific Climate pact, to draw developing nations into binding targets. The Bali conference, and recent conferences in Germany and the US, are directed at a climate change policy beyond 2012, the end of the Kyoto agreement. At the APEC meeting in Sydney, Australia succeeded in getting both China and the US - the world's biggest greenhouse emitters, neither being bound by the Kyoto Protocol - to agree in principle to consider binding targets. China's President Hu Jintao and US President George W. Bush both agreed to the Sydney declaration on greenhouse gas emissions. Mr Garrett's concession on not seeking binding targets on developing countries would allow China to back away from the Sydney declaration and avoid binding targets from the UN process on climate change beginning in Bali in December. Only after Mr Howard and other Coalition ministers began to publicly question the policy, and the media began asking questions, did Mr Rudd, Mr Garrett and a team of advisers hold a crisis meeting at lunch-time in Cairns. It was decided that Mr Garrett, who had made the initial commitment, should release a statement that "clarified" Labor's position and recognised the need to lock developing nations into targets for greenhouse gas emission cuts. After Mr Rudd had flown to Townsville, Mr Garrett issued a statement to the media, emphasising that Labor's policy was to seek binding targets at the Bali conference for both "developed and developing" nations. Mr Garrett's statement even italicised the "and" to make it clear he was repudiating his earlier comments. "Appropriate developing country commitments for the post-2012 commitment period under a binding international agreement would be an essential prerequisite for Australian support for such an agreement," Mr Garrett's statement said. It is the second time in a month Mr Rudd has forced one of his frontbenchers to publicly repudiate a policy proposal. Earlier this month, he slapped down a proposal from foreign affairs spokesman Robert McClelland to launch a pan-Asian campaign against the death penalty. Mr Garrett's blunder also enabled the Government to shift the emphasis on climate change away from accident-prone Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull. It was revealed on the weekend that Mr Turnbull had asked cabinet six weeks ago to sign up to the largely symbolic Kyoto climate change deal because it did not mean much and would help the Government's image. Mr Rudd

had attacked Mr Turnbull, highlighting his difference with Mr Howard and the rest of cabinet on signing the Kyoto protocol.

Storms not enough to top up dams

Big storms that hit southeast Queensland on the weekend provided hardly any improvement in the water levels of the dams that supply the area. Climatologist Roger Stone, from the University of Southern Queensland, said an analysis of projected weather patterns from now until March next year showed that although there would be an increase in extreme weather events such as thunderstorms, hailstorms and tornadoes, this might not lead to more water in the dams. "This year, we're on the edge of La Nina, and so what we're more likely to see is short and sharp storms rather than the sustained type of rainfall which we need to fill up the dams," Professor Stone said. "Those storms of the type which were around southeast Queensland and northern NSW on the weekend don't produce much runoff for the dams. "But it looks as though we will be in for a lot more extreme weather events over the summer season and beyond."

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Southeast Queensland has been extremely muggy over the past few days, with humidity levels reaching 85 per cent yesterday, and the hot air in the lower atmosphere, combined with cold air in the upper atmosphere, has led to a volatile climate. There have been several storms in the evening but the most extreme one was on Sunday night at Munruben, about 40km south of Brisbane, which was hit by a mini-tornado at about 8pm. Nearly every home in the small street of Richmond Court in Munruben was hit hard by the storm, which brought trees down on to houses, cars and sheds, and blacked out the area when power lines were brought down. Over the border, northern NSW has also had a volatile start to summer, with big storms yesterday hitting Lismore and Ballina. These followed a small tornado at Dunoon, north of Lismore, on the weekend and a heavy hail storm at Lismore two weeks ago. The storms of the past few days have provided only passing relief for southeast Queensland's water supplies, dropping an average of 11mm of rain on the Wivenhoe, Somerset and North Pine dams.

Vaile casts doubts on global warming

Nationals leader Mark Vaile has expressed doubts about climate change, arguing there is still conflicting scientific evidence on the "whole concept" that Australians need to scrutinise. But the Deputy Prime Minister said action was needed on greenhouse gas emissions. Mr Vaile's comments, made while he was campaigning in the seat of Dawson, are likely to be seized on by the Labor Party to support its claims that John Howard and the Coalition are "climate change sceptics". Mr Vaile said that climate change had been linked to the drought, but he questioned whether any permanent change had occurred. "Droughts are cyclical in Australia," he said. "They have been in the past. "It remains to be seen how long this one is going to last ... there are records of droughts being as long and as severe as this, but it remains to be seen in terms of any permanent change that has taken place." When asked if he was not convinced that the climate was changing, Mr Vaile said: "Well, the scientific evidence ... some scientists argue that global temperatures are going to rise by X per cent over the next 50 to 100 years, other scientists dispute that, so you've got to analyse that to determine the position. "My view is that in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, it is all of our responsibilities to do something about that - right down to individuals, and we can. "The core of your question was about climate change per se. There is conflicting scientific evidence on it, on that whole concept on it, and we need to continue to analyse that. But I do agree that we need to do something on greenhouse gas emissions." His comments follow Labor environment spokesman Peter Garrett's pledge that a Rudd Labor government would ratify the Kyoto Protocol even if the deal did not include commitments from developing countries. Mr Vaile said Labor's policy would give the world's highest greenhouse gas emitters a "free ride".

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No extra water for farms

River Murray irrigators are warned not to expect more water this year as allocations are put on hold in the lead-up to summer. The State Government has ruled water allocations will remain at 16 per cent in November and further increases during summer are unlikely, because of continued extreme drought conditions in the Murray-Darling Basin. River Murray Minister Karlene Maywald said the 16 per cent allocation might be as high as irrigators would receive for the rest of 2007-08 because of low inflows into the river. Many irrigators had hoped that allocations could be increased slightly to 18 per cent in December and 20 per cent in February if below average rainfall conditions continued. The worst-case drought conditions have prevailed, however, forcing the State Government to warn allocations may not be lifted for the rest of the season. It means fruit, nut and vegetable growers and dairy farmers will have to battle on with barely enough water to keep trees, vines and pastures alive. Many growers have already reduced the size of their properties under irrigation to try to produce a crop. SA Murray Irrigators chairman Ian Zadow said October inflows had not matched what was being taken from the river. "I don't think it's an unsurprising announcement, it is disappointing, but the simple fact is that there's just not the rainfall and inflows, the water just isn't there," he said. "September, October and November are three of the best months for our inflow and they've just been dreadful. A lot of people are in a position at the

moment where they can't see how they're going to get their crop through." Mrs Maywald said inflows were above what was received at the same time last year but were still at near record lows. "Winter and spring is usually when the majority of inflows are received . . . and unfortunately this year this is not the case," she said.

Global warming link

Storm surges such as the flood that swamped Port Adelaide streets yesterday are becoming more common because of global warming, one of the state's most senior climate experts has warned. Adelaide University's head of climate change, Professor Barry Brook, said yesterday that more frequent inundations of coastal suburbs were an alarming reminder of the threat of rising sea levels. A high tide coupled with strong winds, about 6am, to create the surge, which pushed water from the Port River on to land and across roads. Nelson St, St Vincent St and surrounding laneways at Port Adelaide were underwater and some roads were closed. Bureau of Meteorology records show similar storm surges occurred about once every three years.

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Yesterday's flood came four months after a strong storm surge, considered a one-in-10 year event, flooded parts of Port Adelaide. Professor Brook said this was "exactly" the type of weather event that was expected as sea levels slowly rise. He said Adelaide suburbs would feel the damaging effects of rising sea levels well before a 1m increase occurred - predicted to occur globally by 2100. "The water is rising gradually, so each new storm surge event gets higher than the one before," he said. "It could (be directly related to climate change) in the sense that it's going to be the sort of event that is more and more common. There has always been heatwaves, major fire events, but the frequency of these things is what is going to change." Professor Brook said every 10cm of sea level rise tripled the probability of a storm surge event. He said it would cause what is considered now to be a one in 100-year storm surge to occur once every 30 years. "I think people are being lulled into a false sense of security that sea level rise is going to happen in the future but in actual fact these storm surges are going to be more common," Professor Brook said. Port Adelaide Enfield council technical services director Wally Iasiello said the construction of sea walls and increasing the height of vacant land were among the options under investigation into how to prevent damage from sea level rise. "New developments are designed to take these things into account and they are already built with the appropriate safeguards in place," he said. "We are looking at protecting existing development and it will take time to work through the options."

From the office of Karlene Maywald MP

BLEAK OUTLOOK FOR IRRIGATION ALLOCATIONS

South Australian River Murray irrigation allocations for 2007-08 will remain at 16 percent as below average rainfall continues to result in extremely low inflows into the Murray-Darling Basin. Minister for the River Murray Karlene Maywald says she is extremely concerned about the ongoing impact of such low water allocations on our River Murray communities. "In light of the dire outlook, I urge all irrigators to not delay making decisions on how to best manage this situation for their own properties. Help is available through the SA Department of Primary Industries and Resources (PIRSA), the Drought Hotline and industry associations," she said. "Winter and spring is usually when the majority of inflows are received into the Murray-Darling Basin system. Unfortunately this year this is not the case, as we are tracking at near record low inflows again. "River Murray inflows during September 2007 were the fifth lowest on record at 210 gegalitres, just 14 percent of the long-term median of 1 460 gegalitres. At this stage, October inflows are likely to be just as low. "The volume of water held in storage within the four major Murray-Darling Basin reservoirs is currently 22 percent, compared with the average of 75 percent for this time of year. "As a result of these low inflows, the volume of water available to South Australia does not allow for any increase to allocations at this stage, under the current water sharing rules agreed to by State Premiers and the Prime Minister earlier this year. "When the total volume of water available for diversion across the basin reaches 1 500 gegalitres, then further allocations can be made. However, we are still around 130 gegalitres below this target, based on the latest assessment from the Murray-Darling Basin Commission."

Minister Maywald says further increases to allocations during summer are unlikely because of continued extreme drought conditions across the catchment.

"Unfortunately 16 per cent of allocation may be as high as we can expect in 2007-08 because we are continuing to receive inflows into the River Murray system that are among the lowest on record and the forecast for summer is for drier and hotter conditions than normal. "According to the Bureau of Meteorology, this is the first time in records dating back to 1900 that an El Nino drought in the Murray-Darling Basin, as experienced in 2006, has not been followed by at least one three-month period of above-average rainfall by the following winter." Minister Maywald says South Australia's normal daily entitlement flow during October is 5 500 megalitres per day. Currently, we are receiving 2 600 megalitres per day. Water levels below Lock 1 continue to decline. Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert levels are currently around 0.12 metres AHD (Australian Height Datum, metres above sea level) compared with around 0.73m AHD at the same time last year. "The Bureau of

Meteorology is forecasting that there is only a 50:50 chance of receiving above average rain over the next three months and a 65-70 percent chance of experiencing above-average maximum temperatures.

“Salinity levels along the length of the river and in the Lower Lakes continue to increase with the level at Morgan increasing from 300 EC in early March to 760 EC earlier this month. “The salinity level in Lake Alexandrina is currently around 2 340 EC compared to 1 415 EC at the same time in March 2007. “Peaks in salinity will be managed using dilution flows allocated to South Australia to assist with maintaining water quality over summer – South Australia is not permitted to use dilution flows for diversion.”

31st

FarmOnline

Garrett's back flip on climate change pact

Peter Garrett was forced to clarify Labor's approach to securing a post-Kyoto global climate pact after earlier saying it was not a "deal-breaker" if developing nations such as China and India did not immediately agree to greenhouse gas reduction targets.

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Labor's environment spokesman had told the Financial Review Labor might sign up to a post-Kyoto agreement whether or not the US or China accepted binding targets. But later he said Labor would require post 2012 "binding commitments from both developed and developing countries". The Prime Minister, John Howard, seized on Mr Garrett's comments. "The idea of a new international (global warming) agreement which did not apply to developing countries would be very damaging to Australia," Mr Howard said, because it would hurt industry's competitive position and put jobs at risk. Mr Howard has also been under pressure over global warming policy after it was revealed his own Environment Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, had unsuccessfully lobbied Cabinet to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. The Prime Minister has maintained the Kyoto Protocol is past its use-by-date because it does not bind emerging greenhouse gas polluters like China and India. Mr Garrett defended the "new" Labor stance which is now similar to that of other developed countries going into December's UN talks in Bali. "If we are to get countries like China and India to accept targets themselves, then developed countries must act first," Mr Garrett said. * Fairfax Media

AWA

*The first biennial assessment under the National Water Initiative commends considerable progress but says future water management challenges require more work to improve and accelerate the implementation of reforms, particularly reducing the over-allocation of water resources, determining surface and groundwater connectivity, water accounting etc. It cites the rush to invest in new urban water infrastructure as evidence of past planning failures by urban water managers.

*Among the NWC recommendations for urban water planning are: an objective stance on all options (including recycled water, desalination, rural-to-urban trade, new dams, inter-basin transfers, and cross-border transfers) not limits on favoured choices, diversification towards less-climate dependent supply options and harmonising water restrictions.

*The NSW Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management (NRM) is calling for submissions for an INQUIRY into issues of sustainable Natural Resource Management (NRM), with particular reference to the impact of climate change on water; approaches to water use management practices etc.

*The AWA Annual Report for the year ending 30 June 2007 highlights the Association's achievements and progress against plans.

*Federal Labor plans to fund \$100 million "tax credits" to individual water projects intending that these credits will leverage \$10 billion of further investment and grants for approved desalination, water recycling, & storm water capture projects.

*A range of water security measures for the ACT region have been announced: enlarging Cotter Dam, increasing water transfers from the Murrumbidgee, water purification for non-potable uses, demand reduction funds, permanent water conservation measures and Smart Metering programs.

*The Australian Government's Global Opportunities Programme is inviting applications for grants from eligible organisations representing teams of companies that wish to identify and pursue business opportunities in global supply chains or large global projects. Grants of up to \$2million available to approved applicants.

*The Australian Rain Corporation has been granted \$10M from the Australian Government Water Fund to undertake trials of rainfall enhancement technology in South East Queensland. The technology increases the amount of cloud condensation nuclei in the lower atmosphere, to in turn induce convection, could formation and precipitation.

*An Australian Government Comet grant has been awarded to Rapid Detection Pty Ltd for the development of an automated system for rapid in-field detection of Pathogens for common water borne contaminants such as faecal coliforms, E. coli, Legionella, Cryptosporidium and Giardia.

*The Water Corporation (WA) is developing a 50 year plan to deliver safe, reliable water services to customers. The Water Forever project has a significant community engagement component and will result in an action-oriented strategic plan focusing on water and wastewater service delivery up to 2050.

*SA Water's new headquarters under construction in Victoria Square has today been granted 6 Green Star Rating by the Green Building Council of Australia, a first for buildings in South Australia. The building includes an on-site cogeneration plant, rainwater collection and water recycling.

*Gold Coast meat processing plant TEYS Bros has received \$99,250 under the State Government's \$55 million Business Water Efficiency Program (BWEP) to help the company slash its water use by 5.3 million litres a year.

*CYPRUS, faced with less than 6 months' water reserves in the island's reservoirs, began drilling for groundwater in hitherto untapped regions in an effort to exploit known but untapped emergency sources.

*AWWA reports that the US Bush Administration has decided to legislate to make water and wastewater utilities subject to a 2006 Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Security program which requires facilities using & storing specified chemicals (including gaseous chlorine) to submit a special Security Vulnerability Assessment, prepare and implement a Site Security Plan.

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National Water Commissioner Peter Cullen is reported as being "a bit surprised" that \$10 m from the Australian Government Water Fund has been granted to the Australian Rain Corporation to undertake trials of a rainfall enhancement project, rather than a full evaluation of the technology being employed.

*It has been suggested that Australian's should forgo our morning showers in an effort to save water, as the ritual was only adopted after an advertising campaign by a soap company in the 1930's.

*Construction of a desalination plant in Adelaide to cut the city's dependence on the Murray River would be supported by a \$10million grant from a re-elected Coalition government and further water recycling and saving initiatives amounting to a further \$40million.

*Urban water reform needs more attention from all governments with state governments relying too heavily on extracting almost \$4billion from utilities as dividends over the past 5 years alone.

*An impassioned plea for the Queensland State Government to address its "illogical water pricing policy" in the wake of the ongoing drought has been made by the St George irrigation community.

*Visiting the Gold Coast water desalination plant at Tugun, Labor leader Rudd committed a future Labor government to \$1 billion for stormwater harvesting and desalination projects to secure Australia's urban supplies.

NEWS.com.au

Rudd won't guarantee Garrett

Kevin Rudd has refused to guarantee Peter Garrett would serve as environment minister in a Labor government after the former rock star made an embarrassing gaffe about the Kyoto Protocol. Labor has promised to ratify the Kyoto Protocol but the carbon emission reduction targets in the treaty are due to expire in 2012. In an interview this week, Mr Garrett indicated a Labor government might sign a new post-Kyoto agreement even if developing nations such as China and India, which are heavy emitters of carbon, refuse to sign. He later backtracked. During a campaign appearance with Mr Garrett in Townsville yesterday, Mr Rudd refused to say who would be his environment minister. "I have said time and time again that when it comes to all the members of my team that I'll be making the judgment after the next election in terms of who is appointed to which particular portfolio if we win," he said. Mr Rudd has previously promised Wayne Swan would be his treasurer, Julia Gillard his industrial relations minister and Lindsay Tanner his finance minister, but said all other positions would be up for grabs. Mr Garrett yesterday said a Labor government would not accept a post-Kyoto agreement that did not involve developing countries accepting carbon emission reductions. "We will not be in the business, as I said in absolute clear-cut terms this morning, of accepting arrangements for the second commitment period unless there is a parallel commitment from developing countries," he said. Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull said Labor had effectively adopted the Government's position on Kyoto.

Kyoto:Rudd seeks to restore Labor's climate control

Kevin Rudd has tried to restore order to Labor's chaotic climate change policy by "absolutely" refusing to ratify the post-Kyoto agreement unless China and India sign on. The Labor leader's climate change policies were thrown into disarray on Monday when Peter Garrett said it would not be a "deal breaker" for a Labor government if developing nations, such as China, did not accept binding targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Under pressure all day yesterday after Mr Garrett's statements, Mr Rudd unveiled his renewable-energy target to deflect attention from the Kyoto debate. Mr Rudd also flatly contradicted his environment spokesman and said a Labor government would not ratify the new round of Kyoto plans unless developing nations signed binding agreements. "I have made absolutely clear that we would need to see clear-cut commitments from the major emitters from the developing world for us to become party to that agreement," he said. He also claimed John Howard had changed his stance to support different arrangements for developed

nations and the developing world. The Labor leader told ABC's *7.30 Report* last night: "Mr Howard, I've got to say for the first time ... is now prepared to accept different standards for developing and developed countries into the future. I haven't heard that from him before." However, the Sydney Declaration at APEC, forged by the Prime Minister in September, made it clear a climate deal would take into account differences in national circumstances, including separate targets for developing nations. Mr Howard, who accused Mr Garrett of undermining Australia's interests and threatening jobs, said Mr Rudd had capitulated on policy and humiliated his environment spokesman. "This was meant to be the piece de resistance when it came to policy differentiation between us and the Labor Party," he said. "They were meant to be driving and providing leadership on climate change. After a day of total confusion, Peter Garrett, at Mr Rudd's insistence, says 'me too'. "Labor has followed the Coalition. I welcome the bipartisan support that Mr Rudd now offers to the Government on the future of climate change. The most unbelievable capitulation of this election campaign so far is that Mr Rudd now agrees with me on climate change." Labor's position on climate change, particularly its demand that Australia ratify the Kyoto agreement, has put it well ahead of the Coalition on the environment issue. Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull has even urged his cabinet colleagues to ratify Kyoto to counter Labor's lead.

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But on Monday, Mr Garrett confused Labor's position by saying in interviews with *The Australian Financial Review* and the ABC that the ALP would not insist on developing nations agreeing to binding targets. Mr Rudd endorsed Mr Garrett's remarks and said developed nations had to "act first" so that developing nations would follow. But after a crisis meeting with Mr Rudd on Monday, Mr Garrett backed down on his comments and yesterday Mr Rudd declared his policy was absolutely for developing nations to sign the second phase of the Kyoto agreement. Mr Rudd yesterday refused to guarantee Mr Garrett would be environment minister in a Labor government, repeating that only Julia Gillard, Wayne Swan and Lindsay Tanner were certain to keep their portfolios of workplace relations, Treasury and finance. The Labor leader and Mr Garrett argued that their position on Kyoto had been misunderstood and that they had always believed developed countries had to be part of the second phase of Kyoto after the global conference in Bali in December. Mr Rudd said it was absolutely clear from "the positions that we have put on this over a long period of time that number one we need to ratify Kyoto to be at the negotiating table". He said Mr Garrett's statements on Monday were about how to "position yourself post the Bali negotiations for 2012". "My point and Peter's point consistently has been you must be absolutely there as a developed country with a commitment on the table and properly ratified for this period for developing countries like China to take you seriously," Mr Rudd said. Mr Garrett said: "We want to sit down at the negotiating table; that's what Mr Howard doesn't want to do. He wants to sit away from the negotiating table." "This debate is all about Australia being at the table. "Under the Howard Government we're not at the table." Mr Rudd said China would ask: "Why should we be serious about any commitment for the post-2012 period when Australia and the United States have refused to adopt any commitments for the 2008-2012." He said negotiations were complex and there was a lot of horsetrading in getting to the final outcome. "If we get to the next set of negotiations for the next commitment period and we find that there is a complete impasse through developing countries refusing to accept reasonable, rational, hard commitments for the future, our attitude to that is back to the negotiating table - that sort of outcome is unacceptable," Mr Rudd said. "We need to have those major emitters in the next round."

Global warming's already frying brains

I don't know if global warming will destroy the earth, but it is already frying brains. **Check out Peter Garrett's.** Labor's environment spokesman has got the faith so bad - saying Labor would sign a deal to slash our emissions even if bigger countries wouldn't - that Labor's leader, Kevin Rudd, had to shoot him. Which makes two frontbenchers that Rudd has executed for saying precisely what Rudd himself has said. Now there's a sign of a leader who is making it up as he goes along, and is so hungry for power that he'll say anything and ditch anyone. But it's also a sign that when it comes to global warming, Labor hasn't a clue how to make the huge but useless cuts in emissions it has promised without bleeding us dry. **What a farce.** And what a mistake Rudd made to pick as his environment spokesman a salvation seeker who believes with his soul in catastrophic man-made global warming. That came unstuck this week when Garrett told the Australian Financial Review that a Rudd government would sign a proposed new Kyoto Protocol to cut greenhouse gases even if developing nations again refused. If those poorer countries didn't join, it wouldn't be a "deal-breaker" for Labor, Garrett bumbled, because what counted was being "part of the process". But what Garrett was outlining was a complete sell-out of our interests. Fancy a country that emits just 1.5 per cent of the world's greenhouse gases agreeing to choke its economy, while huge China is free to let rip its own. Here's the problem Garrett seemed unable to understand: This "new Kyoto" he was talking about is intended to take over in 2012 from the old - and failed - Kyoto Protocol. The big failing of the old Kyoto agreement, in which all developed countries except Australia and the United States agreed to cut their greenhouse gases by set amounts (but mostly failed), is that it doesn't include countries such as India and China, which are growing frantically, belching more greenhouse gases by

the year. In fact, China is now overtaking the US as the biggest emitter in the world. And with China's President Hu Jintao this month vowing to double the country's wealth by 2020, expect volcanoes of new fumes from the East. Indeed, China is already building one new coal-fired power station every week, every month, every year, and will make us look like fools fiddling in a gale, with our puny low-flow shower heads and barely spinning windmills - none of which will alter the world's temperature by a quiver. Never mind! said Garrett. Quizzed on the ABC's AM program on Monday by a reporter amazed Labor could let China so off the hook, he blithely repeated his lines. "The heat in the system is a consequence of the developed countries' emissions," he claimed, ignoring inconveniently reassuring truths like the refusal of the globe to actually heat since 1998. "They need to commit to reduce. As they commit to reduce, the developing countries come on board." **How cute.**

Garrett - who, oh dear, will handle these negotiations for a Rudd government - really does believe that China and India will feel so ashamed of themselves once they see Australia nobly signing a document, scrapping its gassy industries and slashing its growth, that they will be inspired to do exactly the same. Out of the sheer goodness of their hearts. **Give me a break.** This isn't a Midnight Oil concert, where everyone sings along in the chorus. The hard men of China's Politburo don't do blushes, and know they must grow their country or die.

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But let's not forget Rudd, who has so shamelessly adopted global warming as a New Labor brand. Too soon forgotten in yesterday's coverage was that he at first backed Garrett. "If we are to get countries like China and India to accept global targets themselves then developed countries must act first," he declared at 9.15am on Monday. But by mid-afternoon, Rudd had ditched everything, including Garrett, as it became clear that he was signing on to a disaster, if not for Australia, then for his chances of election. So Garrett was shoved back in front of the cameras to do an about-face. Ah, ahem - in fact, "appropriate development country commitments for the post-2012 commitment period . . . would be an essential prerequisite for Australian support", said the mortified rocker. Which, translated into lyrics, means: No China, no deal. And which, translated into politics, means: We agree with John Howard on the new Kyoto, after all. Or, as Rudd would say, "me too", because here's yet another policy he's copied from the Prime Minister, despite all his save-the-planet talk. Neither Rudd nor Howard will sign a new Kyoto Protocol unless developing countries promise emissions cuts, too.

What a concession. After all, isn't global warming meant to be the issue that most defines the difference between Howard and "Me too" Rudd? But so barren is Labor of any real policy difference with Howard that it was more than a mistake when its Treasury spokesman, Wayne Swan, tried yesterday to calm jitters about his lack of experience, or confidence, by assuring journalists that if elected, "I will take the advice of the Treasurer, the Treasury, sorry". **We're sorry, too.** But at least Labor has now reversed its stand on the new Kyoto deal, so it now echoes Howard's. So what's the problem, you're asking, right? Well, here's a few lessons you might draw. First, Labor's environment spokesman is so messianic that he'd sell Australian jobs for a useless gesture to "save" the earth. Garrett sure has got religion bad. Second, a Prime Minister Rudd will be no team player, having cut Garrett loose this week, just as he dropped foreign affairs spokesman Robert McClelland for repeating Rudd's own promise to try to save even the Bali bombers from capital punishment. And, third, there's actually nothing either party can really do about global warming other than kill our economy. Even if human gases really are heating up the world to hell (which seems exaggerated), nothing we do will make a blind bit of difference without countries such as China. Especially China. And why expect China to cut its gases, when even rich and preachy Britain won't? Just this month, Britain's Prime Minister was warned by one of his ministers that there was no way Britain could get 20 per cent of its energy from renewable sources by 2020, after all. Just too expensive, so let's cut all Labor's slogans, its waffle about meaningless documents, and its setting of never-never targets of cuts in our gases by 2050, when many voters will be dead. Let's instead have something tangible - like firm promises to cover just Labor's first term in office.

So tell us, Mr Rudd:

1. What will your greenhouse policies cost us in spending and lost growth?
 2. What will your policies cut our emissions by in your first three years?
 3. And what difference, to the nearest degree, will this make to the world's temperature by 2010?
- The answer to that last one is zero, isn't it?

Which makes Garrett's spasms and backflips over a deal he'll never sign seem even more farcical. To the few of us still rational, that is.

Water claim a '\$6b whopper'

Premier Anna Bligh has used parliamentary privilege to brand Brisbane Lord Mayor Campbell Newman a liar who had misled southeast Queenslanders about the state's water asset takeover. In an extraordinary attack in State Parliament, Ms Bligh yesterday repeatedly accused Cr Newman of fabricating claims that four leading accounting firms backed his case for \$6 billion in compensation for the water assets. The Premier's attack has shattered the cosy relationship between George Street and City Hall less than five months before council

elections. It comes after the Southeast Queensland Council of Mayors, led by Cr Newman, began a ratepayer-funded newspaper and radio campaign entitled "The Great Water Swindle". The mayors insist they may have to raise rates or cut services, such as mowing parks or fixing potholes, if the state fails to lift its \$2 billion compensation estimate. The campaign was launched on the back of reports by four accounting firms – Ernst and Young, Deloitte, Synergies and PricewaterhouseCoopers – which Cr Newman claimed backed his push for \$6 billion. However, Ms Bligh said Cr Newman had fabricated the claim because the reports made no mention of the \$6 billion figure. "What we have from the Lord Mayor of Brisbane is a \$6 billion whopper," she said. "We can call it what we like. It is an untruth, it is a lie, it is a fib, it is a \$6 billion whopper." Outside Parliament, Ms Bligh stopped short of calling Cr Newman a liar but did not back down, saying she had exposed him as a dishonest person. "I will work with City Hall, I will work with the Council of Mayors, I will work with Cr Newman but I will work on the basis of accuracy, on facts, on the truth," she said. Cr Newman refused to respond directly to the Premier's attack, but insisted the region's 17 mayors were unified in the fight for greater compensation. "I am not going to agree, and neither are 17 other councils, to a proposal that puts ratepayers at a disadvantage, that actually sees services being reduced, potential job losses and also rates going up," he said.

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Ipswich Mayor Paul Pisasale, a member of the mayors' council, said he had little knowledge of the campaign before it began but he was now unhappy with it.

"I am not happy with the whole campaign but at the end of the day you are part of an organisation," he said. Cr Pisasale also said he had never seen the accountancy firms' reports.

Adelaide.now

Garden watering continues - for now

Gardeners will be allowed to continue watering with hoses and drippers once a week during November, despite an increase in water use in October. This month, householders were allowed to use garden dripper systems and hand-held hoses fitted with a trigger nozzle, on weekends, for the first time in three months. Consumption has increased slightly but is below the target set by the State Government. Adelaide's weekend water consumption rose by at least 30 per cent, or 179 megalitres, compared to the last weekend of September, when garden watering was banned. Weekday water use has remained about the same levels as during winter. Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald said consumption had remained below the State Government's target and if that continued, dripper and hose use could continue through summer. "While water consumption has increased under the slightly eased restrictions, this was expected, particularly because of the warmer and drier conditions we've been experiencing," she said. "However, householders are encouraged not to leave their drippers on for the full three-hour period and to only water if their garden requires it." The State Government set an overall consumption target of 45,170 megalitres between July 1 and October 29, which, if exceeded, would trigger tighter water restrictions. Adelaide's water consumption in that period was 38,485 megalitres. Drippers and hoses can be used by even-numbered houses on Saturdays and odd-numbered houses on Sundays, between the hours of 6am and 9am or 5pm and 8pm. Watering cans and buckets can be used at any time.

Fruit, veg growers to double output

Virginia farmers plan to double the amount of fruit and vegetables grown in the region in the next 20 years, despite dry conditions. As uncertainty over water entitlements for River Murray irrigators continues, the Adelaide Plains horticulture industry has a long-term plan to guarantee its water supply while expanding production. The plan would ensure fresh supplies of many fruit and vegetable varieties for South Australia and for export. The industry's Development of Horticulture on the Adelaide Plains: A Blueprint for 2030, released yesterday, relies on recycling rather than rainfall and surface water to meet irrigation needs. The blueprint says the industry has the potential to double production to \$200 million farm-gate value. That would create more than 2400 jobs in the area. The plan highlights access to water supplies must be guaranteed. That would be achieved by increasing the amount of recycled wastewater drawn from Bolivar. The industry already draws about 12 gigalitres a year of recycled wastewater from Bolivar for irrigation. Pipeline extensions could increase that to 23 gigalitres. Stormwater capture and aquifer storage facilities to collect water for summer use also would guarantee supply. Virginia Horticulture Centre deputy chairman Romeo Giangregorio said the self-sufficiency of the industry would ensure its success. "We are excited about the future and it is an exciting industry to be in," he said. The Adelaide Plains horticulture industry is focused at Virginia and Angle Vale and is expanding north. It produces tomatoes, cucumbers, capsicum, almonds, olives and wine grapes. Agriculture Minister Rory McEwen said it also packs the majority of fresh potatoes and carrots produced in SA. "The blueprint outlines the need for both government and industry to commit to horticulture and initiate long term planning for the future of the region," he said. Other priorities include zoning more land for horticulture and attracting new producers to the region.

Victoria's biggest water users revealed

Shopping centres, jails and hospitals are among the state's top 200 water guzzlers, according to a previously secret list obtained by the *Herald Sun*. Myer, Chadstone Shopping Centre, Foster's Abbotsford brewery and the Melbourne Remand Centre are among companies that used about 38 billion litres of water last year.

The top 200 accounted for about 10 per cent of all water used in Melbourne last year. The list showed that six companies - that remain unidentified - used more than a billion litres of water, enough for 400 Olympic-sized swimming pools. The water was used to cool air-conditioners, make soft-drinks, beer, cheese and plastics, and to provide showers and toilets for hundreds of thousands of hospital patients and jail inmates. Federation Square, the MCC, Ford, Toyota, Holden and Nissan made the list, as did five-star hotels Crown and the Grand Hyatt. Four universities, including Melbourne, RMIT and Monash, were among the biggest water users, as were 18 hospitals, four chicken farms and 14 shopping malls. Commercial laundries, soft-drinker makers Cadbury Schweppes and Coca-Cola Amatil are on the list, as are dairy producers Kraft, Parmalat, Nestle and National Foods Milk. Tobacco giant Philip Morris, the Arts Centre and National Gallery and the Melbourne Zoo also are on the list. Eighty-seven companies used more than 100 million litres of water each last year. There are almost 6000 farms in Victoria that use the same amount of water a year for irrigation.

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Irrigators were by far the biggest users of Victorian water, accounting for 77 per cent of the water used statewide last financial year. Annual reports of the state's water authorities, to be tabled in State Parliament today, will for the first time reveal the identities of Victoria's biggest industrial water users. The Government decided to name the companies as an expansion of the "top 200" program, which aims to cut water use across industry by 15 billion litres by 2015. Water used by the top 200 was 1 per cent of the total 3995 billion litres used in Victoria last year. The top 200 companies between them have saved 7.6 billion litres of water a year since the program started five years ago. The savings from industry come as households, which use 60 per cent of Melbourne's water every year, face a long hot summer on harsh stage 3A restrictions. Victorian director of the Australian Industry Group Tim Piper said the new laws identifying big water customers were not meant to be for naming and shaming. Body: He said business had gone to extraordinary lengths to cut water usage in recent years. "Foster's has spent up to \$60 million to make sure they are water efficient," he said. "Qenos (plastics manufacturer) has saved an entire day's water for Melbourne (1.2 billion litres) by making the changes they did. "Coca-Cola Amatil is now using just 1.25 litres of water for every litre of soft drink they provide, which is world's best practice." Mr Piper said business, like the community, knew it had to save water. "It makes good business sense from a community point of view," he said. "There is an expectation from employees, shareholders and indeed from the companies themselves." Mr Piper said there were a number of farms that also used over a billion litres a year. "An industry (business) might employ between 500 to 600 people and use the equivalent amount as a medium-size dairy farm, which employs three or four people," he said. "So we are value-adding in a very economical way."

Labor's bid to curb greenhouse gases

Electricity bills for a family of four will climb by \$40 to \$120 a year under a Labor plan for 20 per cent of Australia's electricity supply to come from green energy. Labor leader Kevin Rudd yesterday revealed an ambitious policy that would require 20 per cent, or 60,000 gigawatt hours, of Australia's energy to be generated from solar, wind geothermal and other renewable sources by 2020. The Howard Government accused Mr Rudd of launching the policy to divert attention from Peter Garrett's backdown over the post-Kyoto climate change regime. Mr Rudd said the scheme would cut carbon emissions by 342 million tonnes between 2010 and 2030. "Australia needs a real robust, renewable energy target," Mr Rudd said. "We believe this is necessary to protect jobs into the future and also to protect our environment into the future." Thousands of wind turbines are likely to be built across Australia to meet the target. Economic modelling prepared by McLennan Magsanik Associates for the Renewable Energy Generators of Australia found boosting the renewable energy target would cost every Australian \$10-\$30 a year over the next 50 years. Mr Rudd and environment spokesman Peter Garrett made the announcement after Mr Garrett came under fire over an apparent backflip on whether a Labor government would sign a post-Kyoto agreement on climate change if developing nations refused to sign. The Government has set a 15 per cent green energy quota. But unlike the Coalition scheme, Labor would not allow power from "clean coal" to count towards its target. Mr Rudd said the proportion of electricity coming from renewable energy in Australia had fallen from 10.5 per cent to 9.5 per cent since 1997. Industry and Resources Minister Ian Macfarlane said the policy would cost \$2 billion and attacked Labor for excluding clean coal from the target. "Excluding coal is a political not economic or environmental decision," he said. "Cleaning up coal would make a huge contribution to addressing climate change." Mr Rudd said Labor would consider compensating people on low incomes. Renewable Energy Generators chief executive Susan Jeanes said she was

confident the industry could meet the 20 per cent target. Australian Conservation Foundation executive director Don Henry praised the policy and urged the Coalition to strengthen its commitment.

Flemington to get desal plant

Flemington racecourse and its famous rose garden will be kept alive with water from an on-course mini desalination plant. The \$5 million plant, to operate by summer 2008-09, will save about 350 million litres of drinking water a year. The water will be sourced from an aquifer beneath the city racetrack. The Victoria Racing Club has been using saline water from the Maribyrnong River for the past two years on dirt and sand tracks, but it has dramatically increased salinity levels on the course. Agriculture Minister Peter McGauran said the water savings would equal that of about 2000 Melbourne households a year. "It's a major water savings announcement but just as importantly is the fact it will secure Flemington's long-term future," he said. VRC chairman Rod Fitzroy said the desalination plant was a first for an Australian racetrack. "The VRC is delighted with the announcement by the Government and it will enable us to bring forward what is a major infrastructure project for the club and to lessen our reliance on drinkable water," he said.

The Australian

Climate body says come clean

The federal government and opposition must cut the "climate confusion" and name their greenhouse emissions targets, the Climate Institute (CI) says.

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CI chief executive John Connor has challenged both major political parties to stop politicking over their separate, but similar, plans once the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012. Speaking to reporters in Sydney, Mr Connor also criticised both parties for spreading "myths" about developing countries failing to take climate change seriously. "We're calling on the major parties to cut through the climate confusion, come clean with their targets for Australia's greenhouse pollution in the next five years and make sure it's going down at that time and not up," he said.

Labor ups the ante on mandatory targets

Kevin Rudd has committed Labor to setting a mandatory 20 per cent renewable energy target to be reached by 2020, in an attempt to recapture the momentum in the climate change debate. The target tops John Howard's by five percentage points, and comes the day after the Opposition Leader forced environment spokesman Peter Garrett to issue a humiliating clarification on Labor's greenhouse policy. The Labor target also excludes energy extracted from clean coal technology or nuclear power, focusing exclusively on renewable energy. Announcing the plan at a state school in Townsville, Mr Rudd said yesterday Labor would expand solar, wind and geothermal generation to power 7.5 million houses a year by 2020. He said the Prime Minister's 15 per cent target was too low because all it did was endorse what was already happening on a state level. Mr Rudd claimed Labor's pledge would not cost jobs but create them, and would cost consumers only an extra \$10-\$30 a year. "We believe this is necessary to protect jobs into the future and also to protect our environment into the future," he said. "We've arrived at this conclusion that we must show new leadership on the future of renewable energy like solar for Australia's future. That's why we are committing ourselves ... to a 20 per cent target by 2020." The mandatory renewable energy target will be increased from 30,000 to 45,000 gigawatt hours a year. Labor's plan would bring existing state-based targets into a single national scheme, and reduce emissions between 2010 and 2030 by 342 million tonnes. Mr Rudd said renewable energy made up 9.5 per cent of Australia's electricity supply, down from 10.5 per cent in 1997. "The Howard Government's consistent refusal to support the industry with policies that encourage clean energy sources has led to many Australian companies moving off-shore to find opportunities to grow and to sell their locally developed technologies," he said. "Mr Howard is now trying to take credit for the renewable energy capacity that will be generated from targets that the state Labor governments have set themselves. "Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the generation of electricity is one of the central challenges in tackling climate change." Labor says its plan will cost around \$600million between now and 2050 at a low carbon price and around \$200million at a moderate carbon price. This would be equivalent to an extra \$10-30 a year for every Australian over almost 50 years, according to Labor. The ALP move comes despite the British Government's recent decision to retreat from sourcing 20 per cent of the country's energy from renewable sources on the basis that it is too expensive and impractical.

PM considers Rudd energy plan

John Howard is urging caution over Kevin Rudd's plan for a big boost to renewable energy. Climate change again is expected to dominate election campaigning today. The Prime Minister is in Melbourne, while the Opposition leader, who was expected to stay in Queensland is now heading for Coffs Harbour and the Nationals-held seat of Cowper. After being forced to clarify Labor's position on whether it would insist on developing countries being part of any post-Kyoto agreement, Mr Rudd turned the debate to renewable energy, announcing a 20 per cent target by 2020. Mr Rudd insists that the target will only add about \$45 per person a year to the cost of electricity and will not cost the coal industry mining jobs. The calculation does not take into account any extra costs of energy on the family budget from a carbon emissions system which threatens to

further increase the costs of dealing with climate change. The target would see Australia produce 60,000 gigawatt hours of green electricity per year by 2020, reducing emissions by 342 million tonnes per year. He rejected suggestion that the policy had been rushed out after having to modify Environment spokesman Peter Garrett's original contention that developing countries did not have to sign up to a post-2012 agreement. "It was always our intention to bring that out today and the reason for it is that when Mr Howard won office in 1996/97, renewable energy represented some 10.5 per cent of Australia's total electricity production," he told the ABC 7.30 Report "Roll the clock on 11 years it's shrunk to 9.5 per cent," Mr Rudd said. "That's solar, wind and all the others put together and that's despite the fact that in the intervening decade, we've had this mounting evidence on climate change." Mr Howard last night said that he had "no objection to an increased use of renewable energy but that he wanted more advice on its effect". Some countries, such as the United Kingdom had been moving away from their renewable energy targets because of the harm it was having on the competitiveness of industries. "But I'm not at this stage saying it's an unacceptable or unsuitable target," he told ABC's Lateline. "We should in this debate find areas of agreement rather than seek areas of disagreement. "We are not antagonistic to renewables, we're all in favour of them but it's a question of balance. "We want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but we want to do it in a way that doesn't damage the Australian economy." Mr Rudd said modelling for the Labor party suggested that between now and about 2045 the total impact on the economy was between \$600 and \$800 million or \$45 per person, or \$1 per person per year.

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"...the overall impact on the economy in terms of growth and jobs in the near to medium term would be negligible and in the longer term, the overall impact on the economy would be significantly positive," he said. "It follows therefore when it comes to coal that the impact in the near term on the coal industry would not be of an order of magnitude which would be throwing people out of jobs."