

Transport Ministers Approve Action to Reduce Transport Emissions and Greenhouse Gases

On 8 August 2002 the Australian Transport Council (ATC) (made up of Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers) approved a National Strategy for Lowering Emissions from Urban Traffic and a National Action Plan to support the Strategy. The Ministers noted that the National Strategy is the first agreed national approach driven by the transport sector to reducing greenhouse emissions.

The National Action Plan will build on a range of activities already underway in each State and Territory. ACT Minister for Urban Services, Bill Wood, said that the Strategy is expected to result in:

- , a linking together of transport services for both people and freight to improve timeliness, reliability, access and safety
- , a reduction in the number of car trips
- , a move towards a pay as you use approach to all transport so that the community understands the true cost of their travel choice
- , a reduction in emissions from vehicles
- , improvements in land use planning to help reduce transport emissions
- , better funding approaches for a greener transport system.

Applying Market-Based Instruments to Natural Resource Management

The Natural Resource Management Council (comprising Commonwealth, State and Territory environment and agriculture ministers) has established a \$10 million program to examine how market mechanisms can be used to conserve and sustain Australia's natural resources. The program will provide funding to run pilot projects testing the uses of market mechanisms such as trading schemes, auctions and price signals to encourage better management of natural resource issues.

The Federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr David Kemp, said that The Council is keen to explore the potential of the market to encourage action to reduce salinity, improve water quality and conserve biodiversity.

The National Market-Based Instruments Pilots Programs is being implemented in two phases. In the first phase \$5 million will be allocated to pilot projects over about two years. If this is successful, a further \$5 million may be allocated to further pilot projects. The program is part of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.

For further information see <www.napswq.gov.au>.

NGO Statements on Corporate Environmental Sustainability

A number of Australian environmental NGOs have signed a Statement of Common Purpose in relation to corporate environmental sustainability. The statement has been prepared against an increasing trend by the corporate sector to use the language of sustainability

The signatories agree that some progress has been made by corporate Australia in moving towards practices that are environmentally and socially sustainable. However, they maintain that the changes to date are inadequate to address the serious, and potentially irreversible, environmental problems confronting the planet. The statement sets out an agreed cooperative approach by the signatories aimed at improving corporate environmental performance.

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has also released a discussion paper, *Corporate Environmental & Social Responsibility: A Law Reform Approach*. The paper sets out a number of law reform initiatives that could be implemented at the international level and in Australia to entrench the link between good corporate governance and corporate environmental and social responsibility.

Copies of the statement and the discussion paper are available at the ACF website <www.acfonline.org.au>.

ACF Discussion Paper on Rights and Responsibilities in Land and Water Management

The ACF has released a discussion paper, *Rights & Responsibilities in Land & Water Management*, that sets out the ACF's position on water access rights and land clearing. The paper argues that, whereas private rights are already well defined, the rights of the environment remain poorly defined, and landholder responsibilities around environmental and downstream impacts are poorly articulated or acknowledged. Also, historically as private rights have been strengthened, these have invariably come at the expense of the environment. In the ACF's view there is now an urgent need to create a new balance between sustainable land and water use and environmental protection.

ACF opposes expansion of existing rights and entitlements in water and vegetation and rights to compensation per se for environmental regulation. ACF accepts that legitimate equity demands a cost sharing solution and that a transition towards ecological sustainability will require financial assistance (structural adjustment), the cost of which should be founded on (1) application of the polluter or impactor pays principle, and (2) contributions of funds from both Commonwealth and State governments. The paper argues that effective resolution of this debate also requires consideration of broader strategic directions in public environmental policy in order to achieve a shift towards sustainable use. Building on these arguments, the paper puts forward a range of proposals for achieving a better balance between land and water use and environmental protection.

The paper is available at the ACF website <www.acfonline.org.au>.

National Packaging Covenant Under Review

The consulting firm GHD has been commissioned to review the effect that the National Packaging Covenant is having on waste management practices. The review is analysing the action plans and annual reports of more than 530 signatories to the Covenant.

The National Packaging Covenant is a self-regulatory agreement between industries in the packaging chain and all spheres of government for the management of packaging waste in Australia. It was signed in August 1999.

Further information about the Covenant is available via the website at <www.ea.gov.au/industry/waste/covenant.html>.

Decision to Wind Up the Australian Minerals and Energy Environment Foundation

In a statement on 5 July 2002 the Chairman of the Australian Minerals and Energy Environment Foundation (AMEEF), Jerry Ellis, said that AMEEF Board had decided to wind up the affairs of the foundation immediately. AMEEF was founded in 1991 and has pursued a range of activities in relation to environmental performance in the minerals and energy sector, including annual excellence awards. Mr Ellis said that the mining industry had advised AMEEF that the industry's preference was to work directly with the community and the NGO sector.