

Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, Slovakia Estonia and most recently Latvia have all taken legal action against the European Commission in relation to pollution quotas set by the Commission, in the Court of First Instance. The litigation precedes the pending argument (due later this year) over which EU countries should bear the greatest burden of EU efforts to combat climate change. The Baltic and East European countries are arguing they need greater latitude to be able to catch-up economically with Western members. Reasons given by the Latvian Prime Minister include that, in the case of Latvia, it needs to produce more carbon emissions because of the phase-out, at the EU's insistence, of a Communist-era nuclear power plant that supplies electricity to the nation. The EU's highest Court – the European Court of Justice is examining a case referred by French authorities, where the steel company Arcelor is arguing that the EU law unfairly imposes burdens on the steel industry not other energy intensive industries such as aluminium and plastics.

COMMONWEALTH AND NATIONAL

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New National Pollutant Inventory (NPI) data for 2005-06

Information on emissions to Australia's air, land and water during 2005-06 was made public on 31 January 2007 with the release of the annual data for the NPI. The NPI is a publicly accessible database containing information on emissions of 90 substances from more than 3800 facilities around the country. This was the eighth NPI reporting year. A total of 47 of the 90 NPI substances reported by industrial facilities decreased compared to the previous year. Further information is available at: <http://www.npi.gov.au/overview/reduction.html>

The NPI can be accessed at www.npi.gov.au

Phase out of inefficient light bulbs

The Australian Government will gradually phase out all inefficient light bulbs and is aiming for full enforcement of new lighting standards legislation by 2009 to 2010. Working with its state and territory counterparts, the schemes will allow special needs areas, such as medical lighting and oven lights, will be taken into consideration. See Media release, 20 February 2007 'World first! Australia slashes greenhouse gases from inefficient lighting'.

Government invests millions to further develop water trade

The Australian Government will invest \$5.6 million to accelerate the development of water trading in Australia. Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, Malcolm Turnbull, told the ABARE Outlook 2007 Conference in Canberra "Water trading is a key plank of the Commonwealth's water policy blueprint, the National Water Initiative (NWI), and critical to national water reform". The funding is applied to three particular projects which are aimed at establishing public and investor confidence in water trade through the establishment of common standards and monitoring of impacts ... They include the development of a national model for water accounting; monitoring the social, environmental and economic impacts of water trading; and improving market confidence in water brokers." Further information on these projects and the Raising National Water Standards Programme is available from the National Water Commission website at www.nwc.gov.au
<http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/env/2007/pubs/mr07mar07.pdf>