

Positive action on coal-fired power emissions

A significant step has been taken to try to reduce the disproportionately heavy greenhouse gas emissions coming from the nation's coal-fired power stations.

Reflecting a proactive approach to tackling one of our biggest environmental challenges, the COAL21 National Action Plan was launched in Canberra on March 24 by the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, Ian Macfarlane, and has been developed over the past year as part of the COAL21 program – a collaborative partnership between the federal and state governments, the coal and electricity industries, and research organisations aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the use of coal.

The Action Plan identifies a number of emerging technologies that hold the key to reducing or even eliminating emissions from coal. These include technologies to capture carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from power stations and permanently store them in underground geological structures, a strategy the Action Plan identifies as the pathway to achieving near zero emissions from coal.

Other priority technologies identified in the plan include ones that increase the efficiency of coal use, and others such as coal gasification that may allow coal to one day provide large amounts of hydrogen gas for a future 'hydrogen economy'.



Willem van Aken/CSIRO Land and Water

A power station at the head of Spencer Gulf, SA, where brown coal from Leigh Creek South is used to generate electricity.

Speaking at the Parliament House launch, the Chair of the COAL21 Steering Committee, Mr Tim Besley AC, said that solving the problem of greenhouse gas emissions will require major changes in the way we produce and use energy, and that technology held the key to addressing the greenhouse issue while meeting the substantial new demand for power.

'A number of emerging technologies hold great promise that emissions can indeed be reduced and in some cases virtually eliminated.'

'A number of emerging technologies hold great promise that emissions can indeed be reduced and in some cases virtually eliminated. COAL21 is a unique, collaborative program aimed at identifying the role Australia should play in contributing to the development of these technologies and understanding how they might be deployed as an integral part of our national greenhouse response,' he said.

'Renewable forms of energy may well prove to be the long-term solution, but it will be many decades or longer before these become a significant part of the generation mix.

'The measures outlined in the Action Plan for reducing emissions from coal therefore complement efforts to increase the uptake of renewables and reign in rapidly growing energy demand through measures to increase end-use efficiency,' Mr Besley said.

More information: <http://www.coal21.com.au>

Illegal takes outweigh legitimate Southern Ocean fishing

Over the last eight years, the value of illegal catch taken in our southern waters surpassed that recorded by licensed operators, reinforcing concern over the undermining of fisheries' management efforts, and unresolved legal issues.

Speaking at OUTLOOK 2004, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) conference, in March, Dr Denzil Miller of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) revealed that the illegal harvest was estimated at US\$518 million compared to

US\$486 million for legitimate fishing.

Despite the Antarctic Treaty, signed in 1959 to protect the Antarctic marine environment, a number of legal issues are thwarting protection measures to ensure the sustainable management of fisheries.

Dr Marcus Haward of the University of Tasmania said that illegal fishing also has political and social implications. 'Traditional fisheries laws have not been very successful and new methods for combating illegal fishing need to be explored. There is a need for complementary, multi-faceted



Bruce Miller/CSIRO Marine Research

Better monitoring measures aboard Southern Ocean vessels is providing tighter catch estimates.

approaches to tackle the issue.'

John Davis of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority said that the Australian Government

is pursuing all legal avenues available to at least control toothfish pirating in the Heard Island and MacDonald Island fisheries.