

COAG adopts a new national Climate Change Action Plan

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed on strong forward steps on central key sustainability issues, including climate change mitigation and future energy supply, at its latest meeting on 10 February.

The gathering of ministers agreed to adopt a new national Climate Change Plan of Action and to establish a high-level inter-jurisdictional Climate Change Group to oversee implementation of the Plan's recommendations.

'COAG recognises the differences between the Commonwealth and the State and Territory governments, yet agreed there is an important opportunity for all levels of governments to work cooperatively on climate change policy and action,' the Council's outcomes report said.

'In addition to a number of specific actions, the Plan sets out a framework of policy principles designed to lay the foundation for further cooperative work in the future.

'Governments agree on the need to accelerate significantly our conversion to low emission practices and technologies



Solar panels at Queanbean, NSW. Renewable energy featured in COAG's decision-making on energy supply and climate change impacts. Greg Heath/CSIRO

to reduce the risk of dangerous climate change and provide greater investment certainty in the light of greenhouse risk.'

COAG reports that initiatives in the Plan include:

- a national framework for the take-up of renewable and low emission technologies;
- a national climate change adaptation framework to assist effective risk management by business and community decision-makers;
- a study to identify the gaps in technology development;
- a \$100 000 study to examine options, such as a dedicated Centre for Climate Change Science and Knowledge, for ensuring that Australia's scientific research resources are organised to effectively support climate change decision-making at the national and regional levels;
- acceleration of work by Ministerial Councils, which are investigating options to strengthen emissions reporting approaches; and
- all relevant Ministerial Councils to consider any

climate change implications of their decisions and activities.

COAG also agreed to improve price signals for energy consumers and investors with actions that include 'committing to the progressive national rollout of "smart" electricity meters from 2007 to allow the introduction of time-of-day pricing, and to allow users to better manage their demand for peak power' – depending on cost benefits for residential users and market circumstances in each state.

The federal and state ministers also agreed to ensure the electricity transmission system supports a national electricity market, providing energy users with the most efficient, secure and sustainable supply of electricity from all available fuels and generation sources, and to include where appropriate an increased share of renewable energy.

Proactive positions were also taken on infrastructure and transport reform.

More information:
www.coag.gov.au

Our offices far from the green ideal

A recent Newspoll phone survey of almost 400 office workers has revealed that most Australian offices are not implementing simple practices to reduce energy use, greenhouse gas emissions and landfill waste.

The survey – commissioned by stationery supplier Pilot to promote its 'BeGreen' pen brand – found that:

- 74 per cent of respondents say their offices always have air conditioning operating
- 14 per cent work in offices where lights are not turned off at night
- 25 per cent use recycled paper only
- 85 per cent say they unnecessarily print

copies of documents rather than proofreading them on screen

- 35 per cent do not turn off their computer every night
- 20 per cent do not have bins for recycling paper in their workplace
- 50 per cent do not have a bin for recycling aluminium cans, plastic bottles and other recyclables.

'Air conditioning is a major contributor of greenhouse gas emissions and often accounts for almost half of an office building's energy consumption,' said Arron Wood, environmental campaigner and the 2001 Young Australian of the Year, who is promoting the Pilot Office Audit.



14 per cent of respondents said their office lights are not turned off at night. Tamara Murray/istockphoto

'Leaving electrical equipment like computers on all the time attributes to around 280 tonnes of greenhouse gases annually.'