



MEDIA RELEASE

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National action plan aims for cleaner coal

A comprehensive plan for reducing or eliminating greenhouse gas emissions from the use of coal in Australia's electric power generation was launched in Canberra today by the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, the Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP.

The COAL21 National Action Plan has been developed over the past year as part 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.

Speaking at the Parliament House launch, the Chair of the COAL21 Steering Committee, Mr. Tim Besley A.C. said that solving the problem of greenhouse gas emissions will require major changes in the way we produce and use energy.

"An essential part of the solution must be to minimise emissions from our use of coal and other fossil fuels during what will be a very long transition to more sustainable energy systems.

"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.

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".

Mr Besley said COAL21 has benefited from the input of many people representing a wide range of perspectives and expertise. Participants have included the Federal Government through the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources and the Australian Greenhouse Office, State government agencies from New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria, public and private research bodies, technology developers, electricity generators from Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, industry associations and individual coal producers. Many other individuals and groups have provided valuable input in response to the COAL21 Issues Paper released in August 2003.

The COAL21 Action Plan has been developed as an input to policy making and as a valuable contribution to the national discussion around energy and greenhouse.

Mr Besley said 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. 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.

For further information and interviews contact: Mark O'Neill or Paula Matthewson on 02 6273 6044 or 0412 018880. The COAL21 National Action Plan is available online at www.coal21.com.au

A background paper and BetaSP tape of the technology is available.

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