

COAG Progresses Climate and Energy Programs

The Council of Australian Governments has agreed its 2008 work agenda, including climate change and water, infrastructure, business regulation and competition at its meeting in Melbourne on 20 December 2007.

Working groups have been established and these are overseen by a Commonwealth Minister, with deputies who are nominated by the states and territories at a senior departmental level.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd says, "This is a new model for the way in which we do business. Usually these things are devolved entirely to Commonwealth bureaucrats."

COAG has agreed to meet on a quarterly basis in 2008.

A working group on climate change and water will develop a plan for achieving the national expanded Mandatory Renewable Energy Target by 2009.

The Commonwealth will work with states and territories (and other stakeholders) on its plan for finalising design and implementation of the national Emissions Trading Scheme. The working group will be the vehicle for Commonwealth consultation with the state and territories.

The implementation plan to be delivered to the March 2008 COAG meeting will also include developing a coherent and streamlined set of climate change measures across jurisdictions to complement implementation of the ETS.

The working group on climate change and water will report to COAG by September 2008 with final MRET design and proposals for a streamlined set of complementary policies across jurisdictions. Options to accelerate uptake of energy efficiency measures will also be developed.

COAG agreed also to accelerate and broaden the regulation reduction agenda to reduce the regulatory burden on business. COAG will also carry forward the existing competition work program, including work on national energy market development.

The Commonwealth government will consult with the states and territories on the establishment of the Infrastructure Australia Council, including on board nominees, with the aim of establishing the Council as soon as possible in 2008.

A working group focusing on infrastructure will develop an implementation plan covering mechanisms for Infrastructure Australia to report to COAG. They will develop a plan covering the scope of the National Infrastructure Audit, which is to examine the future capacity of energy and water infrastructure, amongst other things.

The infrastructure working group will develop an implementation plan covering a forward work program for Infrastructure Australia, including scope for streamlining of planning and approval processes, standardisation of project appraisal techniques and the guidelines and principles for the assessment of Public Private Partnerships.

The implementation plan will be provided to COAG by the infrastructure working group by March 2008.

[Source esaa news]