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Media release

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Government Still Deludes on Climate Change

In announcing funding under its Low Emission Technology Fund the federal government is trying to convince the public that we must wait for new technologies to reduce Australia's greenhouse pollution, according to the Australia Institute.

"We can cut our emissions sharply with existing technologies as demonstrated by the huge response of renewable energy companies to the MRET scheme, which is now fully subscribed", said Institute Executive Director Dr Clive Hamilton.

Dr Hamilton was addressing a meeting at Manning Clark House in Canberra.

"Mr Howard is determined to bail out the coal industry even if it means we must wait another 10-15 years before 'clean coal' technologies become viable", he said.

"We have lost ten years with the Howard Government's denial, obfuscation and bloody-mindedness; we simply cannot afford to lose another ten years before we tackle the most severe threat to our future.

"For a decade the Government has been trying to persuade us that throwing a bucket of money at industry will deal with climate change. It has not worked so far and will not work in the future.

"The only answer is to mobilise market forces to cut greenhouse gas emissions by putting a price on carbon. There is no alternative."

Dr Hamilton said that the Government's climate change policy is mired in contradictions.

- The Government says ratifying the Kyoto Protocol would be economically ruinous, yet claims Australia will meet its Kyoto target anyway.
- It says it rejects Kyoto because the treaty does not include big greenhouse polluters like China and India; yet a treaty that did require those countries to reduce their emissions would immediately cut demand for Australian coal exports.

In a 2003 report titled *Voluntary Approaches to Environmental Policy* the OECD confirmed that voluntary programs such as those once again being relied on by the Federal Government rarely have any impact.

"Australia's energy and industrial greenhouse gas emissions have been sky-rocketing throughout the tenure of the Howard Government, and the *only* test of effective policies will be when they start to fall", said Dr Hamilton.