

principles in the Vision Statement. Discussions are already underway on the practical elements, including a work plan and a wide range of technology areas for possible collaboration.

The recent G8 announcement at Gleneagles also recognises the important role that technology will play in future global agreements on climate change. Australia will investigate ways to become involved in initiatives under the G8 Plan of Action. Australia will also play an active role in other international fora such as the ASEAN regional forum, APEC and the International Energy Agency.”

NATIONAL AND COMMONWEALTH

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EPBC Act updates

Review of Tasmanian Bilateral Agreement

A review of the operation of the Bilateral Agreement between the Tasmanian Government and the Australian Government Bilateral is underway, with the opportunity for public comment closing on 5 August 2005. The Agreement operates pursuant to Section 45 of the *EPBC Act*, relating to environmental impact assessment. The Agreement entered into force on 15 December 2000 and is due to expire on 14 December 2005. The text of the current Bilateral Agreement may be found at: <http://www.deh.gov.au/epbc/assessmentsapprovals/bilateral/tasmania/agreement.html> .

Procedures and Systems for the Conduct of Major Military Exercises

Draft Terms of Reference were released in March 2005 in relation to the strategic assessment, under the *EPBC Act*, of the Environmental Management Processes, Procedures and Systems for the Conduct of Major Military Exercises. Public comments were to be received by April 2005 and the Terms of Reference will subsequently be finalised. The Department of Defence is then expected to produce a report detailing its procedures for the management of environmental impacts of major military exercises.

Draft “significant impact” guidelines

The Department of the Environment and Heritage has released the following draft guidelines for public comment:

- Draft Principal Significant Impact Guidelines
- Industry Sector Guidelines for Aquaculture, Windfarms and Urban Development

The Guidelines are intended to provide guidance on the practical application of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Comments on the Principal Guidelines are due by 28 October 2005. Comments on the Industry Sector Guidelines are due by 21 October 2005. For further information and copies of the draft guidelines, see <http://www.deh.gov.au/epbc/policy/index.html#guidelines>.

Other matters

Alpine grazing licences

On 24 May 2005 the Victorian Government announced that alpine grazing licences held by cattle owners in the Victorian high country would not be renewed, ending a practice that had continued for 170 years. The Government’s main reason for eradicating cattle grazing in the area, much of which is part of the Alpine National Park, was to protect fragile alpine ecosystems. However, on 10 June 2005 the Federal Environment Minister responded to the State Government’s move by issuing a temporary heritage listing to protect the summer cattle mustering tradition. This is believed to be the first time an activity has been nominated for the National Heritage List. At the time of writing, the Australian Heritage Council was assessing the Federal Government’s nomination for permanent listing and its legal status remained

unresolved. Further details of the nomination may be viewed on the AHC website, at: <http://www.deh.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahdb/search.pl>. If alpine grazing gains permanent listing, the conflict between the Federal and State Governments may be taken to the High Court for resolution.

Sea Change Taskforce

The Commonwealth Government has proposed that the management and planning of Australia's coastal areas the joint responsibility of the local, state and federal governments. This proposal would shift some coastal planning powers from local governments to the Commonwealth. The Federal Environment Minister, Ian Campbell, indicated in July 2005 that the Commonwealth Government was looking to a 30-year joint coastal development plan to overcome problems with unrestricted coastal development in some areas. The increasing numbers of 'sea-changers' moving from cities to coastal areas are seen as having contributed to these problems. The National Sea Change Task Force has also produced a recent report on the issue of 'sea change' and coastal development, entitled 'Meeting the Sea Change Challenge: Sea Change Communities in Coastal Australia'.

Radioactive waste disposal sites

On 15 July 2005 the Commonwealth Government revealed its plans to dispose of low- to medium-level radioactive waste at one of three sites in the Northern Territory. The potential sites, all of which are owned by the Commonwealth and currently used for defence purposes, consist of Mount Everard (27km northwest of Alice Springs), Harts Range (165km northeast of Alice Springs) and Fishers Ridge (42km southeast of Katherine). The Federal Minister for Science, Brendan Nelson, has indicated that a site will be selected over the coming 12 months, followed by an environmental impact assessment for the chosen site. The waste facility is intended to be built and operational by 2011 in order to meet Australia's international treaty obligations and enable the development of a new nuclear reactor in Sydney. The waste facility would process radioactive waste which has been used for medical, industrial and research purposes by various Commonwealth agencies. The Commonwealth Government's plans are contrary to legislation passed in August 2004 by the Northern Territory Government, which bans the transport and disposal within the Territory of radioactive waste from interstate.

Climate Change Adaptation Report

A report on climate change, titled 'Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability – promoting an efficient adaptation response in Australia', was released by the Commonwealth Government on 26 July 2005. The report recognises that climate change is inevitable and points to early planning as an important tool for communities, governments and industries in managing the effects of climate change over the next 20-30 years. A copy of the 'Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability' Report is available at <http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/impacts/publications/risk-vulnerability.html>. On a related note, Australia has joined five other countries to form the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, which was announced on 28 July 2005. Australia will host the inaugural ministerial meeting of the Partnership.

Export of hazardous electrical goods

The export of used electrical goods from Australia has been restricted in new guidelines announced by the Commonwealth Government on 18 July 2005. The tighter criteria are designed to ensure compliance with Australia's obligations under the Basel Convention. Under the Basel Convention, signatories must ensure that all hazardous waste exported from their country can be managed safely in the recipient country. The Basel Convention is implemented in Australia by the *Hazardous Waste (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1989*. Further information on the new guidelines is available at <http://www.deh.gov.au/settlements/publications/chemicals/hazardous-waste/electronic-paper.html>.