

Environment (IGAE). He points out the agreement not only appears to favour the states but is not even legally enforceable according to legal advice provided by the Office of General Counsel. For Toyne, the way forward is the adoption of an approach similar to that used in the United States where the States maintain their own regulatory and administrative arrangements which must meet national standards which are set by a Federal Environmental Protection Agency in consultation with major stake holders.

During his time as the Executive Director of the Australian Conservation Foundation, Toyne demonstrated an ability to remain focussed on the main game; an ability which is again clearly evident in *The Reluctant Nation*. Given that our current Prime Minister was so highly critical of the new federalism process which spawned the IGAE and that the Court Government has now withdrawn Western Australia from The National Environment Protection Council the time must surely be ripe for the Federal Government to re-examine the existing co-operative arrangements and perhaps even assert its national role in the management of the environment.

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## **RELEASE OF AUSTRALIA'S GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS INVENTORY**

On 7 September 1994 the Federal Minister for Environment Senator Faulkner released Australia's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory. The inventory measures the sources and sinks of Australia's Greenhouse gas emissions for 1990 and 1988, thereby providing a picture of the net emissions of the various greenhouse gases. To allow effective comparisons to be made the different gas emissions have been reduced to carbon dioxide equivalents.

The inventory is a part of Australia's First National Communication on Greenhouse Gas Emissions, along with a report on our emissions projections. The Communication is a requirement under the Climate Change Convention and is to be lodged with the Convention Secretariat by the end of September.

Total greenhouse gas emissions in 1990 were estimated to be equivalent to 572 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. That means Australia is responsible for emitting something like 18 tonnes of carbon dioxide every second. The inventory confirms Australia's per capita emissions are in the world's top five.

Of the three main greenhouse gases carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide - carbon dioxide emission accounted for almost three quarters of the total emissions. The single largest contributor to emissions is the energy sector, which produces about half of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions. Surprisingly land clearance was the next largest source of carbon dioxide emissions; responsible for almost one quarter of all emissions. However the Federal Environment Department notes there are significant uncertainties in this estimate.

Releasing the inventory Senator Faulkner acknowledged that even taking account of current measures Australia's greenhouse gas emissions will in fact rise by seven percent (or 38 million tonnes) by the year 2000. That is with the current limited set of response measures detailed in the National Greenhouse Response Strategy Australia will not meet the emission targets established pursuant to the Climate Change Convention.

At present there are five working groups looking at areas such as energy , transport, urban design and government to identify further measures that could be adopted to reduce emissions. Senator Faulkner indicated that the Federal Government will be considering their recommendations before the end of 1994.

(This article was compiled from DEST's Background Briefing on the Greenhouse Gas Inventory)

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## **CUMULATIVE HARM A MAJOR THREAT**

**Chris Phillips, a Western Australian lawyer sees chemical exposure as a hidden but growing health menace**

***"Over the last 3 years I have acted for 5 clients whose experiences with chemical exposure should sound a warning to us all."***

The widow of a man who worked for 19 years in a laboratory, using solvents to separate minerals, watched her husband's health slowly deteriorate. His horrific nightmares, personality change, loss of memory, loss of motivation, loss of concentration power together with extreme fatigue and deterioration in his physical health, caused him to leave his employment and then to lose the will to live. Although the employer maintained throughout a denial of liability, eventually the widow's claim for compensation was settled and she recovered significant damages for the loss of her maintenance and support as a result of her husband's death. There was cogent evidence that although the immediate cause of death was carbon monoxide poisoning, the chemical exposure had rendered his death inevitable.

I acted for a woman who worked for about 4 years in the aggregate in a job in which she was exposed to a range of chemicals but particularly to solvents used to separate and identify minerals. Again, although negligence was never admitted, her case was settled before trial and she recovered substantial damages for the pain and suffering and economic loss she claimed as a result of chemical poisoning.

A woman who worked in the petrol dispensing industry, having contact firstly with exhaust fumes and then later she was exposed over many months to petrol both by inhalation of fumes and direct skin contact. She also developed chemical poisoning symptoms, and although liability was denied, her case was settled before trial and she recovered substantial damages.

I currently act for two women claiming poisoning symptoms associated with exposure to a steriliser and disinfectant containing Gluteraldehyde although they also worked with other chemicals to a lesser degree. One was a dental therapist, the other a nursing sister in a hospital.

In these cases also negligence and the cause of illness are denied.

In all but one of these cases, including that of the victim of chemical poisoning who died there has been compelling evidence that each of those exposed to an enormous range of chemical fumes which most of us ordinarily may not even notice let alone be harmed by. A name often given to this illness is multiple chemical sensitivity or MCS...