

COUNCIL FOR THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION

COMMUNIQUÉ

ADELAIDE, 21 February 2008 - The Council for the Australian Federation (CAF) held its fourth meeting today in Adelaide. The Council discussed key issues relating to the reinvigorated Commonwealth-State relations environment and reaffirmed its commitment to co-operative Federalism. In addition, the Council agreed to principles for urban water planning and the continuing reduction of cross-jurisdictional anomalies through harmonisation and deregulation activities.

Premiers and Chief Ministers also expressed their concern about the recent distressing events that occurred in East Timor, and wished President Ramos-Horta a speedy recovery.

The meeting was attended by all State leaders and the Chief Minister of the ACT and was chaired by the Honourable John Brumby, Premier of Victoria.

Interim findings of the Garnaut Review

Today, Professor Ross Garnaut briefed Premiers and Chief Ministers on the interim findings arising from his climate change review which was jointly commissioned by CAF and the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr Kevin Rudd. CAF is committed to working with the Commonwealth Government to respond to Professor Garnaut's interim findings which recommend: a proposed design for an emissions trading scheme (ETS); complementary measures needed to support an ETS; and the level of emissions reductions that Australia will need to pursue. CAF acknowledged these interim recommendations will be significant inputs into future climate change policy decisions. CAF agreed to work towards developing measures to mitigate potential cost impacts on Australian consumers.

COAG Working Groups

Premiers and Chief Ministers reconfirmed their support for the new COAG Working Group structure and their commitment to ambitious national reform in the areas of health and ageing, productivity (encompassing early childhood development, education and skills), infrastructure, climate changes and water, business regulation and competition, housing and indigenous reform. CAF is committed to working collaboratively with the Commonwealth Government in these and other areas to improve outcomes for all Australians.

Vehicle Safety

States and Territories continue to be concerned about the high level of road fatalities in Australia and the slow takeup of new safety technologies in vehicles. Nationally, approximately 38% of new passenger vehicles sold in Australia have Electronic Stability Control fitted as standard, compared to approximately 70% in Europe.

Today Premiers and Chief Ministers committed to improve vehicle safety standards to ensure new vehicles are safer and that the benefits of new technologies are realised. CAF will urge the Prime Minister to expedite work on vehicle standards to require improved safety technologies be fitted to new passenger vehicles. In the absence of an equivalent national standard, States and Territories have agreed to progressively require safety technologies as a condition of registration in new passenger vehicles manufactured after 31 December 2010.

Cutting interstate red tape

A focus of CAF's work in 2008 will be in cutting red tape for business and citizens and families moving interstate. Premiers and Chief Ministers agreed that the eradication of cross-jurisdictional anomalies would be a standing item at each CAF meeting. Since late 2006, CAF has driven:

- harmonisation of daylight savings from April 2008 in Victoria, NSW, South Australia, Tasmania and ACT;
- harmonisation of key areas of workers compensation and Occupational Health and Safety schemes at the October 2006 meeting; and
- removal of impediments to the movement of skilled workers within Australia.

Today CAF agreed to two measures which will make life easier for people moving and working across interstate borders:

- *Drivers' Licenses and Vehicle Registration:*
In April 2007, CAF commissioned a report from Austroads on '*Greater Harmonisation of Registration and Licensing Practices Across Australia*'. CAF, in conjunction with Austroads, will now undertake detailed analysis of the costs and benefits of policy and legislative changes required for greater harmonisation of licensing and registration across all jurisdictions.
- *Travel Concessions for Senior Cardholders:* Today CAF announced States and Territories would work together to examine the harmonisation of travel concessions for Senior Card holders. This work is possible through a commitment by the Rudd Government to fund reciprocal travel concession for State and Territory Seniors Card holders.

Urban Water Principles

CAF today endorsed draft principles for urban water planning to be released for further consultation. The principles acknowledge that States and Territories are facing similar pressures in securing water resources for towns and cities and that responses need to be coordinated across governments. The principles will assist jurisdictions undertaking long term planning for urban water supplies to ensure future demand is met.

The Urban Water Principles will provide practical assistance to government and large metropolitan and regional utilities. The draft principles advocate:

- planning based on up to date information on population growth and climate change and forecasts
- community input into developing water efficient behaviours
- diversification of supply to complement existing water sources.

The draft principles will be forwarded to the COAG Working Group on Climate Change and Water to inform their work.

East Timor support

Today CAF noted the assistance currently being provided by Australian States and Territories to East Timor, which have contributed to development and growth in East Timor over the last decade.

CAF agreed to the CAF Secretariat acting as a central repository of information on State and Territory initiatives in East Timor, to assist jurisdictions to coordinate their activities, identify opportunities, avoid duplication and enable possible cross-jurisdictional collaboration.