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Power in your hands

As we were completing the pages for this issue, good news arrived on progress made at the recent COAG meeting on 10 February (see page 7). Under energy reform and efficiency discussions, state and federal ministers agreed to improve energy price signals for consumers and investors, including committing to a progressive national rollout of 'smart meters' (considering a cost-benefit analysis) to facilitate daytime electricity pricing, allowing users to better manage their peak and most costly demand.

Improving users' electricity use efficiency is seen as one of the single biggest ways to immediately and significantly reduce greenhouse emissions, and see off emerging demand constraints. As discussed on page 12, smart metering puts that power in the hands of the user – so to speak – and allows everyone to make a personal effort to reduce emissions, while also reducing their bills. Sensibly, price signals should now gear with efforts to reduce energy demand.

COAG also agreed to a sustainable national electricity grid and market, fed by all available fuels and sources, including a greater share of renewable energy. This dovetails into perhaps the most significant outcome of the meeting: agreement to adopt a new national Climate Change Plan of Action, with an appointed high-level Climate Change Group to oversee its implementation.

The Plan seeks to balance proactive measures to prepare for the extreme effects of climate change against the sensitivity of business and society. Escalating the broad



support and fast implementation of renewable energy and low-emissions technologies is a fundamental part of the Plan. That's optimistic news, due credit.

Finally, our lead In Brief story summarises the landmark outcome of Senator Bob Brown's injunction against Forestry Tasmania's activity in the Wielangta Forest. Having won this first legal instalment, Brown has successfully thrust into national question our international responsibilities for biodiversity, its vulnerability, and the integrity of legislation and special licences around logging and other disturbance in our protected or undeveloped areas.

Enjoy your reading.

James Porteous

James Porteous
Managing Editor

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We are using the accessibility of the Internet to run our latest 5-minute survey of reader satisfaction and opinion. This is your chance to support and influence the magazine, so please visit our homepage at www.publish.csiro.au/ecos and give us your thoughts by 31 March. There are 25 prizes to be won.



Robert Cumming/istockphoto

Next, in issue 136

In the April–May issue, we examine the environmental credentials of hotels, and ask how passengers would handle voluntary emissions offset charges on domestic flights.