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Copenhagen Disappointment Highlights Competitiveness Risks of CPRS

The failure of the Copenhagen negotiations to lock in binding commitments from any country, let alone developing countries, has serious implications for the implementation of climate change policy in Australia, Executive Director of the Australian Coal Association (ACA) Mr Ralph Hillman said today from Copenhagen.

“The coal industry wants to see Australia address climate change as part of an international solution, however as a result of the less than optimum outcomes from Copenhagen, clarity on international burden sharing is now further away than ever and competitiveness issues for Australian industries now loom even larger, Mr Hillman said.

From a coal perspective what Copenhagen clearly demonstrated is that no other country is going to impose any sort of constraint on fugitive emissions from coal mining, this will leave Australia truly alone in contemplating that measure.

“The ACA has consistently argued that the proposed CPRS package, which is due to return to the Senate again next year, will undermine the competitiveness of the coal industry and put at risk regional Australian jobs for no environmental benefit. The fact that we have now seen from Copenhagen that no other country will impose such a burden on their respective coal mining industries must surely demonstrate that there is a need for some serious rethinking about the CPRS in Australia,” Mr Hillman said.

On a positive note discussions in Copenhagen did emphasise the important role that low emissions technology will play in the fight against global emissions, a cause which the coal industry has long supported.

“Ultimately it will be the availability of economically viable low emission technologies that will reduce the cost of dealing with global emissions and ease the path to global agreement, Mr Hillman said. The Australian coal industry remains committed to developing low emission coal technologies and will continue to work with the Federal and State governments to see carbon capture and storage (CCS) demonstrated at commercial scales in Australia by 2015,” he said.

The Australian coal industry has long recognised the importance of CCS in responding to climate change and is investing \$1 billion to support the development and demonstration of this technology,” Mr Hillman concluded.

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Biography: Ralph Hillman Executive Director

Mr Hillman was Ambassador for the Environment and chief negotiator for Australia on the Kyoto Protocol from 1998 to 2002. He was appointed as Executive Director of the Australian Coal Association in August 2007.

He was Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the OECD from 1995 to 1998. From 1994 to 1995 Mr Hillman was Chief Economist in the Department. He was formerly a senior career officer of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and has extensive experience in multilateral economic policy and diplomacy.