

Greens warn of State blow-out on gas limits

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By Daniel Clery

WA WILL be a big culprit in the projected blow-out in national greenhouse gas emissions over the next decade, according to the State's peak environmental lobby group.

The WA Conservation Council predicts that a series of resources projects awaiting State Government approval will increase greenhouse emissions by 20 million tonnes a year over the next five to 10 years.

This would make WA the prime mover behind a projected 33 per cent increase in national emissions from 1990 to 2010, contained in an Australian Greenhouse Office report leaked by the Federal Opposition last week.

Under the 1997 Kyoto protocol, yet to be ratified by the Federal Government, Australia agreed to cap its emissions at 8 per cent above 1990 levels.

The council's figures are disputed by the State Government.

Draft carbon rights legislation will be considered at a Cabinet meeting in two weeks.

The legislation would allow companies to offset their carbon dioxide emissions through land rehabilitation.

Cockburn MLA Fran Logan, who chaired the Government's carbon rights task force, said WA's resources-based economy produced high greenhouse emissions on a per capita basis.

But he said the State's total emissions were small on a global scale and the Government stood by its commitment to balance investment with a future reduction in emissions.

The Conservation Council maintains that the proposed developments represent a big rise in WA emissions.

Council convener Rachel Siewert said the Government's public commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions was incompatible with its efforts to attract a host of energy-intensive developments to the State.

"I've sat on government greenhouse committees for over 12 years and have yet to see a meaningful strategy be developed," she said.

Greens (WA) MLC Robin Chapple said it was hypocritical for Federal Labor to attack the coalition over its greenhouse policies when the State Labor Government was driving the blow-out.