

## *The Age*

### **Emissions panel funds fossil fuels over renewables**

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THE fossil-fuel industry has been the overwhelming beneficiary of the Federal Government's \$500 million low-emission technology development fund, receiving \$335 million of the \$410 million already allocated.

The renewable-energy sector has received \$75 million, with just one renewables project — a massive solar-power station near Mildura — having its funding application approved by the panel appointed by the Government to distribute the \$500 million fund, created in 2004.

The majority of the panel members have links to the coal, mining and fossil-fuel industries. Aside from two senior bureaucrats, the panel consists of — Ken Humphreys, the technical support manager for a joint United States Government-private sector, clean-coal initiative called FutureGen; former National Australia Bank chief executive and Ashton Mining director Nobby Clark; and former CRA mining company chief executive, former BHP director and former Commonwealth Bank chairman John Ralph.

Mr Ralph made headlines last October when he questioned the link between human activity and climate change.

Another panel member, Paul McClintock, was a former senior private secretary to Prime Minister John Howard and has served as chairman of Ashton Mining and Plutonic Resources and as a director of Homestake Mining.

Former Telstra chief executive Ziggy Switkowski is also on the panel. The Government last week appointed Dr Switkowski chairman of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation, months after he headed a Government inquiry into the viability of nuclear power.

The Government yesterday announced \$100 million from the low-emission fund for a new 400-megawatt coal-fired power station in the Latrobe Valley, which Industry Minister Ian Macfarlane said would produce 30 per cent less greenhouse-gas emissions than conventional brown-coal generators.

But Australia Institute deputy director Andrew MacIntosh said the announcement was further evidence of a "one-sided process" for government funding that put coal projects far ahead of renewable energy initiatives.

"The Government is being totally dictated to by the coal industry and is showing no regard for Australia's long-term interest," he said.

The low-emission technology fund also has provided \$75 million to a project to extract methane from coal in Queensland, \$60 million for a gas carbon storage project in Western Australia, \$50 million for brown-coal drying and \$50 million for a system that could be retro-fitted to Australian coal-fired power stations to make it cheaper to capture greenhouse gases.

The Age can also reveal that the Government has been receiving climate-change information from the same consultancy firm that produced a report for the Energy Supply Association of Australia in January that said cutting greenhouse-gas emissions by 30 per cent by 2030 would cost Australia \$75 billion.

Documents from the Government's contract database show the Coalition has paid CRA International more than \$100,000 for advice on climate-change and energy, including \$11,000 for a one-day review of the British Government's Stern report on global warming.

Former Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics executive director Brian Fisher joined CRA International last October as a climate-change specialist.

During his time as ABARE head, the Commonwealth Ombudsman criticised it for allowing fossil-fuel companies to fund its climate-change research.

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/investigations/emissions-panel-funds-fossil-fuels-over-renewables/2007/03/12/1173548107182.html>