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AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENT MINISTER CONTRADICTED BY GREENHOUSE EMISSIONS CASE

A court case in Brisbane tomorrow contradicts Australian Environment Minister Ian Campbell's concerns over climate change reported on the front page of today's *Australian*.

The Minister's public statements are that, "*global warming ... is a very serious threat to Australia*" and "[*to avoid dangerously high levels of greenhouse gases*] you need a massive injection of new technology, you need basically everything the world's got at its doorstep at the moment. You need wind, solar, nuclear, gasification of coal, you need every single thing and you need more."

In contrast to these statements, in the case before the Federal Court, the hearing of which concludes before Justice Dowsett tomorrow, the Minister is relying on statements by one of his departmental officers that global warming is merely a "*genuine concern*" to avoid a case brought against him by north Queensland conservation group Wildlife Whitsunday.

The case concerns the need to consider the emissions of greenhouse gas emissions from the mining, transport and use of 48 million tonnes (Mt) of coal from two new Queensland coal mines, the Isaac Plains Coal Project and the Sonoma Coal Project. The likely emissions from the full fuel cycle of using 48Mt of coal are in the order of 121-162 Mt of carbon dioxide equivalent. To put this in context, Australia's annual greenhouse gas emissions are about 550 Mt of carbon dioxide equivalent. So, basically, the use of the coal from the two mines is equivalent to about 20% of Australia's annual greenhouse gas emissions.

Ian Lee, President of Wildlife Whitsunday asked, "*How can it be that the emissions from these mines aren't assessed and regulated under the Australian Government's main environmental law? The mines could still go ahead if they were assessed under the Minister's own legislation - but the use of the coal could be restricted for use in clean coal and low emissions technology. The Minister says we need to do these things but what the Minister says in public and what his government does are two very different things.*"

The Environmental Defender's Office of Northern Queensland Inc is the solicitor for Wildlife Whitsunday.

For further information contact Ian Lee (07) 4785 2969 or Kirsty Ruddock (Solicitor EDO-NQ) 0439 531 968 or Larissa Waters (Solicitor EDO-Qld) (07) 3211 4466.

The Environmental Defender's Office of Northern Queensland is a non-profit community legal centre that specialises in providing public interest environmental legal advice, community education and undertakes local, state and national law reform campaigns. EDO-NQ is a member of the National Environmental Defenders Offices Network.