

THE HON ALEXANDER DOWNER MP

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dr Andrew Southcott MP
Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

0 8 AUG 2006

Dear Dr Southcott

The Australian Government is conscious of the impact of greenhouse gas emissions on climate change, and is developing a range of measures to address, in particular, carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from the extraction and use of fossil fuels. Support for the advancement of carbon capture and storage technology and the development of an international regulatory framework to ensure this technology is used appropriately are important aspects of this work.

On 24 March 2006, the 1996 Protocol (the Protocol) to the London Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matters (the London Convention) entered into force, thereby replacing the London Convention. The Protocol is more restrictive than the Convention. It prohibits all onshore-to-offshore dumping unless explicitly permitted by Annex 1. This would include sub-seabed sequestration of CO₂ produced onshore. However, in October 2005 a Consultative Meeting of the London Convention agreed that the sub-seabed sequestration of CO₂ should be allowed to proceed, and noted an amendment to the Protocol might be required.

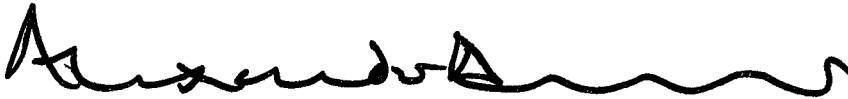
On 28 April 2006, Australia formally proposed the attached amendment to Annex 1 of the Protocol to allow sub-seabed sequestration of CO₂. The proposal was co-sponsored by France, Norway and the United Kingdom. Parties to the Convention will vote on the amendment at the next Consultative Meeting in early November. If agreed to by a two-thirds majority, the amendment shall enter into force 100 days after its adoption at the November meeting.

I am writing to provide the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties with early advice of the proposed amendment, and to keep the Committee informed of the Protocol process for the entry into force of the amendment. I will provide a copy of the final text for the Committee's information once the outcomes of the November meeting are available.

As key sponsor of the amendment, Australia should ensure the timely entry into force of the amendment as stipulated under the Protocol.

I thank the Chair and the Committee for their consideration.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alexander Downer', with a long, wavy flourish extending to the right.

Alexander Downer

Cc: Senator the Hon Ian Campbell, Minister for the Environment and Heritage.