

Australia targets 20 pct renewable energy by 2020

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Australia's government will ask the Senate Tuesday to approve plans to produce 20 percent of energy from renewable sources by 2020 after the house rejected a proposed carbon trading scheme.

Australia on Thursday passed a clean energy law requiring the country to produce 20 percent of its power from renewable sources by 2020 in move that could draw billions of dollars of green investment.

The Australian senate passed the government-sponsored bill just days after parliament rejected further-reaching but controversial legislation aimed at slashing carbon emissions.

"This is an extremely important achievement and it is one of the key institutional changes in the battle that the government is undertaking to deal with climate change," said Greg Combet, deputy minister for climate change.

"The passage of the legislation will help unlock

investment in renewable energy generation and of course in jobs associated with those industries in areas like solar and wind power, amongst others," Combet told parliament.

Electricity companies will now be forced to buy a portion of their power from renewable sources under the laws, which passed without opposition after being split from the controversial emissions trading bill on Sunday.

Origin Energy, Australia's largest green energy provider, welcomed the renewable energy laws but said they were a poor second to the tougher carbon pollution reduction scheme (CPRS) proposed under the emissions bill.

"In the longer term, the CPRS is the lowest cost way to drive investment in cleaner technologies," said Origin executive general manager Carl McCamish.

"We encourage all political parties to negotiate a workable agreement to ensure that the CPRS is passed as soon as possible."

Combet warned that without the CPRS emissions would be 20 percent higher in 2020 than they were in 2000.

"It is the principal mechanism by which we will go ahead to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in this country and play a constructive role in international negotiations over climate change," he said.

The conservative opposition joined forces with the Greens and independents in the senate earlier this week to reject the combined renewables-emissions bill, which aims to cut carbon pollution by five to 25 percent by 2020.

The Greens supported the separate renewable energy plan despite failing in a bid to have the target lifted from 20 to 30 percent.

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