

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Monday 19 January, 2009**

## **Australian industry insight to emerging US energy policy**

The Australian energy sector will gain invaluable access and insight to emerging United States emissions trading, climate change and nuclear policies under the Obama Administration, with Energy Retailers Association Executive Director Cameron O'Reilly specialising on the matters as part of a US Fulbright Professional Scholarship.

Mr O'Reilly will be based at the Centre for International Energy and Environment Policy at the University of Texas in Austin between March and June 2009, and will also spend time at Georgetown University in Washington DC.

Sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, this year's Australia-US alliance Scholarship is centred on "lowering emissions from the stationary energy sector while remaining competitive."

Mr O'Reilly's presence in the US is timely and relevant to developments in Australia, given that President elect Barack Obama has indicated a willingness to implement an emissions trading scheme and adopt a pro-active stance in global climate change negotiations.

With an alignment of US and Australian energy policies seemingly imminent, and given the similarities between the Australian and Texas climates and energy systems - including a competitive generation and retail sector - Mr O'Reilly specifically chose Austin as a base to examine the potential impact of a carbon price on the US energy sector.

"Texas as a State will be one of the most impacted areas in terms of an emissions trading scheme, and is home to some of the companies that will be most affected by a price on carbon", Mr O'Reilly said.

"It will be a case study of the challenges faced by the US and provide examples of how Australia-US cooperation in the energy sector - such as in carbon-capture and storage and the development of wind power can be maximised. Texas is a global leader in these fields, making the visit all the more relevant.

"There'll also be an emphasis on examining the US' ability to expand nuclear power, which has been accepted as part of the policy mix by the incoming President and may be a source of future uranium export growth for Australia."



ERAA Chairman David McAloon said the Board anticipated thought-provoking intelligence upon Mr O'Reilly's return to Australia and would ensure that this information was shared with the local energy industry and all levels of Government.

"The shifts in US policy are likely to influence the chances of a post-Kyoto treaty and therefore the targets and stance adopted in Australia's own emissions trading scheme," Mr McAloon said.

During his study leave of absence, which begins on 28 February, 2009, Mr O'Reilly's role will be performed in an acting capacity by the ERAA's Director of Policy, Alastair Phillips. Alastair will be the ERAA's media contact during the months of March, April and May, 2009. On matters relating to US policy Mr O'Reilly's contact details at the University of Texas will be available from the ERAA Secretariat.

Mr O'Reilly will return from his period of study leave to continue his role as Executive Director of the ERAA in mid-June, 2009.

### **About ERAA**

**The Energy Retailers Association of Australia (ERAA) is the peak industry body representing retailers of electricity and gas in Australia's National Electricity Market (NEM) and national gas market. Member companies operate in all the States of Australia and have over 11 million customers. The members include AGL Energy, Origin Energy, TRUenergy, Energy Australia, Integral Energy, Country Energy, Aurora Energy, Victoria Electricity, Simply Energy, Australian Power & Gas, Babcock & Brown Power, Ergon Energy, Synergy Energy and ActewAGL.**

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

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(Feb 28, 2009 – June, 2009): Via ERAA Secretariat (ask for Samantha Petchell)

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