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## Australia Suspends Emissions Trading Proposal

By MERALIAH FOLEY  
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SYDNEY, Australia — After two years of deadlock, Prime Minister [Kevin Rudd](#) said on Tuesday that his Labor government had put its carbon [emissions trading](#) plan on hold. The proposed emissions trading system had aimed to cut [Australia's](#) emissions by 5 percent of 2000 levels by 2020, while giving significant concessions to energy-intensive industries. The plan was twice rejected by a bloc of conservative and Green Party lawmakers in the Senate last year and faced almost certain defeat were it to go before Parliament again this year.

Mr. Rudd said he had been forced to shelve the plan, citing the Senate impasse and the lack of certainty in global talks about a successor to the Kyoto Protocol. He said the government would wait to re-examine the need for an emissions trading system at the end of 2012, when the Kyoto deal expires.

"It is very plain that the correct course of action is to extend the implementation date," Mr. Rudd said in Canberra, the capital. "That will provide the Australian government at the time with a better position to assess the level of global action on [climate change](#)."

Mr. Rudd was elected in 2007 on a promise of reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, and polls have repeatedly shown strong support for government action on climate change. Nevertheless, the emissions trading proposal has been drawn criticism from economists, business groups, scientists and opposition politicians of every stripe.

Conservatives said the plan would stifle economic growth while environmentalists argued that it gave too many concessions to big polluters. Public support for the plan fell when some reports suggested that electricity and [food prices](#) would rise with the higher cost of energy in Australia, which derives much of its power from [coal](#).

Some analysts believe the government's decision was a tactical one. Though Mr. Rudd's approval ratings remain strong, recent polls have suggested that climate change is becoming less important to an electorate that has shifted its focus to education and health care reform, skyrocketing housing costs and [immigration](#). National elections are due this year.

The decision to suspend the trading plan also trims billions of dollars from the upcoming [federal budget](#), potentially freeing up funds to be spent on social programs and nipping opposition claims of poor fiscal management in the bud.

"It sounds like a decision has been made that they don't need this noise in the lead in to an election campaign," said Michael Wesley, the executive director of the Lowy Institute for International Policy. "I think the government has decided that they're not going to fight

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