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**March 16, 2016**

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## **MORE STATE LEADERS TO LEARN HOW AUSTRALIA WEATHERED ‘HISTORY’S WORST’ DROUGHT**

### ***California Nonprofit to Lead Study Tour, Examine Best Practices for Dealing with Water Shortages, Environmental Damage***

SAN FRANCISCO – This week, the California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy (CFEE) will lead a delegation of public officials, environmental and labor leaders, business executives and policy experts to Australia to learn first-hand how that nation effectively managed one of the worst droughts in modern history.

The “Millennium Drought,” which dragged on from 1995 to 2010, was an existential threat to Australian society. Government, working with private citizens, nonprofit groups, science and policy experts, and the private sector, managed to confront this threat by adopting dramatic changes to the ways in which water was collected, owned, distributed and consumed in Australia. Although the country received higher than average rainfall beginning in 2010, they have since returned to the beginning of drought conditions this year.

Here at home, despite recent rains, California remains mired in series of multi-year droughts. Like Australia, California has a heavily resource-based economy, led by agriculture, and is today a major contributor to worldwide carbon emissions. Policy leaders, both inside and outside of government, are grappling with the twin challenges of surviving the droughts and combatting climate change.

The CFEE Study Travel Project to Australia, which runs March 18-25, is the second time the nonprofit will bring state leaders to Australia to study that nation’s drought response in the past six months. CFEE led a delegation there in October.

CFEE will facilitate meetings with Australia’s top government officials, regulatory authorities, environmental organizations and business leaders to exchange information and explore best practices and technologies from the Australian experience. The delegation will visit a variety of cutting-edge facilities – from water harvesting plants to small scale “in-situ” desalination operations to technology enhanced channeling of water to farmers based on water markets – all to see first-hand what kind of innovations are helping Australia survive and thrive.

Meanwhile, here in California, debate continues to rage over the degree to which government can, or should, enact policies to reduce carbon emissions while maintaining a healthy growing economy. And, if so, how to do it in the midst of extreme draught conditions.

CFEE, an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit “think-tank,” regularly convenes conferences in California that bring together state leaders – both in government and outside of it – to examine critical issues related to California’s environment and its economy, with a view toward building bipartisan consensus around long-term solutions to California’s biggest challenges.

The CFEE delegation heading to Australia this week includes seven members of the State Legislature (the October delegation included 11 different elected officials) along with a variety of leaders from industry, organized labor and the environmental movement.

Twice each year, CFEE plans and leads a study travel project to places in the world that have grappled with environmental challenges similar to those California faces.

“Australia has pioneered methods to plan, fund, finance and deliver critical infrastructure, in ways that promote both environmental sustainability and job growth,” said Dr. Patrick Mason, President and CEO of CFEE. “We have a lot to learn.”

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### ***About the California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy***

*The California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy (CFEE) is an independent, nonprofit institution dedicated to educating public and private sector decision makers on, and developing creative solutions to, California’s complex environmental, economic and social issues.*

*The Foundation brings together senior executives from California businesses, statewide labor leaders, and the leading advocates from environmental and consumer organizations to meet with legislators and regulatory officials in an atmosphere of non-adversarial cooperation.*

*Created in 1979 to advance consensus among those on the frontier of decision-making, the Foundation develops and conducts public policy discussion forums as well as study travel projects abroad to educate California’s leaders on issues and gain insights from the experience of other states and nations.*

*CFEE’s forums and travel projects put a diverse cross-section of California leadership into direct contact with their counterparts around the world. This sharing of views and experiences leads to a broader understanding of complex issues, and encourages the exchange of policy and technology ideas.*