

Australia and International Environmental Law: A Recent Example of Leadership

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Once upon a time, from the 1970s through the mid-1990s, Australia had a well-earned international reputation as a world leader in the normative development and implementation of international environmental law. For nearly two decades, however, Australia has been more often a laggard rather than a leader. Today, we are regularly criticised over a variety of actions and non-action. This includes our national climate change policies, our delay in ratifying the Paris Agreement, insufficient protection of World Heritage like the Great Barrier Reef, and the list goes on. I would prefer that we were leaders again and with that in mind, I want to focus on one recent success story that Australia has been instrumental in driving. This does not excuse our failures, but serves to highlight how we can lead if we have the political will. So, today, I want to talk about Australia's key role in achieving major progress towards the global phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) – a significant greenhouse gas – under the Montreal Protocol to the Vienna Convention on Ozone Depleting Substances.

Don Anton took up the inaugural Chair of International Law at Griffith University in 2015. He is a leading international environmental lawyer. He maintains an international practice and has appeared for clients in a number of notable cases, including before the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the Supreme Court of the United States.