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Fed: Questions over big climate change conference

By Don Woolford
AAP Newsfeed (Canberra)
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An international climate change summit, which the government announced with great fanfare would be held in Adelaide in November, looks likely to be postponed.

The BBC has reported that the meeting would take place in January at the earliest.

A spokeswoman for Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said today dates were still being finalised, but refused to say if it could be later than November.

"Senior ministers are committed, but coordinating their schedules is very difficult," she said.

Mr Downer announced the summit at the ASEAN regional summit in Laos in July, as an alternative to the Kyoto process which the government rejects.

Adelaide, Mr Downer's home city, was to host the first meeting of a major group of nations, including the United States, China, Japan and India, committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through technology and voluntary partnerships.

Greens Senator Christine Milne pursued Environment Minister Ian Campbell about the fate of the meeting, which she said had been cancelled.

Senator Campbell said Kyoto was not the answer to climate change and

the new Australian-initiated process was a major way to address the problem.

But he didn't answer directly when asked if the Adelaide meeting had been postponed, saying no-one had asked for a postponement.

Senator Milne said later Australia had committed an appalling confidence trick on the rest of the world over climate change.

She said Mr Downer had said it would be the most significant meeting in Adelaide's history, with heavyweight international delegations coming.

"But it seems Mr Downer has failed to attract anyone," she said.

Senator ! Milne said there'd be no Adelaide meeting in November because nothing had been done.

"It was a hastily cobbled-together announcement to disguise an agreement to export coal and uranium to India and China," she said.

She said the point of having it in November was to undermine a UN meeting in Montreal in December on the Kyoto process.

The BBC quoted a senior official saying the meeting would not take place as scheduled and January was the earliest possible time.