



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILLS

**Clean Energy Legislation (Carbon Tax Repeal)
Bill 2013, Ozone Protection and Synthetic
Greenhouse Gas (Import Levy) Amendment
(Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013, Ozone Protection
and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Import Levy)
(Transitional Provisions) Bill 2013, Ozone
Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas
(Manufacture Levy) Amendment (Carbon
Tax Repeal) Bill 2013, True-up Shortfall Levy
(General) (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013,
True-up Shortfall Levy (Excise) (Carbon
Tax Repeal) Bill 2013, Climate Change
Authority (Abolition) Bill 2013, Customs Tariff
Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013,**

**Excise Tariff Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal)
Bill 2013, Clean Energy (Income Tax Rates and
Other Amendments) Bill 2013, Clean Energy
Finance Corporation (Abolition) Bill 2013**

Second Reading

SPEECH

Thursday, 21 November 2013

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Questioner		Responder	
Speaker	Bandt, Adam, MP	Question No.	

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (11:39): I rise to oppose this bill and to move an amendment to the amendment. I move:

That all words after "House" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:

(1) "rejects this bill and the related bills and recognises that global warming is an enormous threat to the Australian way of life and is getting worse; and

(2) calls on the government to take stronger action to protect the Australian people from climate change."

It is important to step back and remember why we are doing this, why we are having this debate. We are having this debate because global warming poses the greatest threat to the Australian way of life that we are currently experiencing. In the face of that threat, when the first obligation of the government should be, in Ronald Reagan's words, to protect its people, the Prime Minister and his government are choosing a policy of appeasement. At the very time that we need a climate change Churchill we have got a Chamberlain. We have got a Prime Minister who, instead of choosing courage in the face of the threat of global warming, is choosing cowardice.

What the scientists are telling us and have been telling us for a long time is that we are on track to make the kind of bushfires and super typhoons that we have seen recently not just become events that happen every now and then but become a regular part of our way of life. The scientists have told us very clearly that the planet is not like a room where you can turn the thermostat up and down but is like the human body, and if we increase its temperature beyond the narrow band within which human life can sustain itself then we run the risk of runaway global warming and effects that we just cannot control. The body has a core temperature and you do not want it to go more than a couple of degrees above that—you may not know exactly what is going to happen but you know that an organ might shut down and then if it goes too far it might be irreversible and the patient might die. The scientists have told us that the planet is the same and that if we increase it more than two degrees on average we might start seeing things happen that we can no longer control. We could have great melts of the Greenland or the Arctic ice sheets and feedback loops could start kicking in that neither we nor our children or grandchildren are going to be able to reverse.

Alarming, what they also tell us is that at the moment we are on track to heat the planet by four degrees by the end of this century—that is the world that it looks like we are going to leave for our grandchildren. What does that mean? It does not just mean that things are a little bit warmer and you can wear a layer less of clothes. What it means, according to the Four Degrees of Global Warming: Australia in a Hot World conference proceedings, is that Melbourne turns into Cowra in terms of average temperatures by the end of the century. It means Adelaide's climate becomes analogous to Kalgoorlie. It tells us that when it comes to Alice Springs the scientists say they cannot find a comparator in Australia; there will be none in Australia this hot and dry, it would be like the Sudan. Most scarily, when they ask what Darwin looks like by the end of this century if we continue going as we are at the moment, they say we cannot even put Darwin in the table because 'for Darwin it is unlikely to exist anywhere on the planet'. That is what is in store for us at the moment.

Yes, we have always been a country that is prone to bushfires, but why on earth would you wish more of them on us? But that is what this Prime Minister and this government have in store for us if their policies are implemented. We have seen what their policies mean not just for Australia but around the world as increasingly we are saying to the rest of the world, even though we are the world's highest per capita polluter, 'We just don't care.'

So passing this legislation is tantamount to saying: 'We don't mind if there are more bushfires in Australia and we do not mind if there are more supercharged typhoons like we have just seen, because we are not even committed to the minimum possible pollution reduction targets. We do not care what happens in the rest of the world, because we will not even send anyone of any seniority to the meeting.'

It is not just going to be that bushfires will happen more often and that the Murray-Darling is going to start to dry up permanently. We also know that the burden and impacts of climate change are going to fall hardest on those who can least defend themselves. Mr Deputy Speaker Broadbent, you would probably know this, but more people died in the heatwaves associated with the Black Saturday period than died in the fires themselves. The people who will suffer will be the people who are the most vulnerable and least able to insulate themselves from the effects of global warming. We do not just have an environmental obligation, to make sure that we do not completely wreck this planet that we are on, but we also have a social obligation, to make sure that our neighbours, both at home and in other countries nearby, will be able to enjoy the quality of life that we take for granted. Yet, at the moment, that does not look like it is on the cards with this legislation.

This legislation is taking away a package that has been looked at by the rest of the world, who have said, 'Yes, this is the direction that we need to go in.' What it did, very simply, was say to those big polluters who, up until now, had been putting pollution into the atmosphere for free: 'We know you can't keep doing that for free, because it is going to come at a cost to us, and so you are now going to have to pay for something approximating the price of your pollution, and the money that we raise we will put towards low-income households so that, when their electricity bills rise, they are compensated. And we will put some other money towards other projects, including getting renewable energy on track.' That was a very, very sensible proposition.

What we have here from the government is a wrecking of that, and a wrecking of a very far-sighted—but by no means novel—approach to support renewable energy in this country, in the form of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. This kind of support for particular industries exists not just in other places around the world but here in Australia. We hear the government saying, 'Why should you subsidise projects that cannot get support from elsewhere?' If you are going to take that approach, be consistent about it. Why do you give a diesel fuel rebate to miners so that they can buy cheap diesel fuel, yet you are not prepared to give a leg-up to renewable energy, when the scientists are telling us that by the middle of this century Australia needs to become a zero pollution economy?

It is not just the Clean Energy Finance Corporation that the government are going to rip up; they are going to rip up the only source of independent advice in this country about what Australia needs to do to do its fair share to combat global warming, the Climate Change Authority. The Climate Change Authority is the Reserve Bank of the climate world. It is providing independent advice to this parliament about how we will meet the legislated caps to 2050 and what we need to do to do our fair share. It is no wonder the government want to rip it up, because it is advice that the government do not want to hear. If there is one thing we are learning very quickly about the government, it is that they will shut down any dissenting voices, especially voices that provide advice that they do not want to hear, and they will withhold information from this parliament and from the people.

That is what is going on, because the Climate Change Authority said that the government's five per cent pollution reduction target is inadequate, is not going to help us avoid the kinds of catastrophes that I have just been explaining and is going to mean we will see bushfires in this country more often. Of course, the government do not want to hear that, so, rather than respond to it, they are just going to shut the Climate Change Authority down, and that is what this legislation does. Worse, they have got nothing to put in its place. There is not an alternative ready to spring up when this legislation is passed. There is nothing. That speaks volumes about just how much the science deniers within this government are running the show.

It is absolutely clear that, as we head into a summer where people will be wondering, 'Are there going to be more bushfires; are there going to be more heat waves; is this now the Australian way of life?' the government are saying, 'We don't care.' They are quite happy to bring a government down and have a debate about a few dollars extra on your electricity bill but, when it comes to the most fundamental duty of any government, which is protecting the country's people and protecting its way of life, they thumb their nose and they say, 'We don't care.' In the future, children and grandchildren are going to look back on this government and it will stand condemned. This government will be remembered as the government that said: 'We will rip up action on global warming, we will turn Australia into an international pariah and we will leave you to clean up the mess that we leave behind. We are going to put nothing in its place.' So I urge the House to reject the bills and to support my amendment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): Is the amendment seconded?