



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**Carbon Pricing**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 28 June 2012**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

---

## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 28 June 2012  
**Page** 8426  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Prentice, Jane, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mrs PRENTICE** (Ryan) (16:36): The most important word in this MPI before us today is the word 'accurately'—that Australians be informed accurately of the impact of the carbon tax. In May this year the government began what by Saturday will be a \$46 million advertising campaign—rising to another \$24 million—to explain that the Gillard government was actually doing something. The ads indicated that, out of the kindness of the government's heart, Australians will receive 'extra help with their everyday expenses'. The government told Australians that they did not have to do anything—the money would just magically appear in their bank account and appear regularly. Earlier this month the Prime Minister and other Labor ministers decided to come up with a handy hashtag on Twitter : 'cash for you'. There was no mention of where this money was coming from or even why they were doing it.

There are two words that this government seem to have forgotten how to say—'carbon tax'. In those taxpayer funded ads , nowhere did the government mention the carbon tax. They did not even mention why Australians would suddenly have higher everyday expenses. Call it what you will—carbon pricing, emissions trading, a tax on carbon dioxide emissions—the Gillard Labor government have minced their language so much that they have deceived even themselves on the fact that they are threatening the Australian economy and the livelihoods of all Australians with the world's only economy-wide carbon tax.

Despite pre-election claims, the Gillard government brought in a carbon tax and then introduced a massive welfare program to cover up the true cost of that tax. The government then misled the Australian people by inaccurately saying that the coalition would take away people's money. Yes, they claimed that we would cut welfare programs, like the schoolkids bonus, because we would repeal what led to their necessity in the first place.

Make no mistake: the next election will be a referendum on the carbon tax. If elected, the coalition will repeal the legislation and scrap the carbon tax. The coalition will do this because we know that the carbon tax comes at the worst possible time for Australian businesses and will begin a slow squeeze on the economy, hurting current businesses and driving away future investment. Every Australian in this country will be affected by the carbon tax, and not all Australians will be compensated—duly or otherwise, and never to the extent of their hurt.

In particular, Australians should be accurately informed that the carbon tax will negatively affect senior Australians—a group that constitutes 30 per cent of the population. This is an important group in our society, which this Gillard Labor government constantly disregards. As such, it is absolutely crucial that the parliament is discussing this matter of public importance today. There is no doubt that there will be a huge adverse effect on senior Australians caused by the carbon tax, for which even this failed government, with its money grabs here and 'cash for you' programs there, will not be able to recompense. The government claims that the carbon tax is not a tax on Australians but that it is a tax on polluters. The real point with that claim is that the Labor Party value the intelligence of Australians so little that they think that they can get away with such a statement.

We need only consider the electricity industry. All Australians, including seniors, will still be using electricity in four days time, from 1 July 2012. All electricity production will face a tax of \$23 a tonne and the price elasticity for demand for electricity is so inelastic that close to, if not exactly, 100 per cent of those costs will be passed on—and passed on to seniors. The government do not understand that after 1 July the annual bill for a typical residential household will be around \$192—or 11.2 per cent higher, as calculated by the Queensland Competition Authority. Brisbane has just experienced the longest run of cold days in four years, and senior Australians need to keep warm by using their heaters. There are currently over 1.2 million Australians on the full-rate pension and almost 800,000 Australians are on a part pension. Those people on a fixed Centrelink or pension income are already being frugal with their budgets, and they have already reduced their electricity consumption to the bare minimum. When prices go up, they simply cannot reduce their electricity demand and will be paying the full brunt of the carbon tax.

What do these people do after 1 July? What is the government's accurate advice to senior Australians during a cold winter? On the government's Living Green website they suggest that a fun way to save on electricity costs is to 'break out the board games'. Perhaps they should have expressly mentioned when they began the rollout of so-called compensation packages, or even thinly-veiled ones such as the schoolkids bonus, that everyone should spend that money buying games of Monopoly.

On top of electricity price rises, seniors in many council areas will be hit harder by the carbon tax. Is the government going to compensate them for the extra costs incurred as a result of residing in the Brisbane City Council local government area? The answer is no.

**Honourable members interjecting—**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr KJ Thomson): Order! Members on both sides will cease interjecting. The member for Ryan has the call.

**Mrs PRENTICE:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I asked the Deputy Prime Minister two questions in question time recently about how the carbon tax will add 1.9 per cent to every resident's rates and how the government will assist the council. As is the wont of government ministers in this place, he did not answer those questions directly; instead he responded with half-truths and political nonsense.

The other group which this Gillard Labor government has turned its back on is self-funded retirees, estimated to consist of more than 500,000 Australians. Of these, there are some 285,000 people who are not eligible for a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card and as such are not eligible for assistance from this government to pay for the price increases as a result of the carbon tax. These are senior Australians who have sacrificed spending and who have done the right thing to save for their retirement. Because they worked hard, they do not have to rely on taxpayers. But this carbon tax and lack of compensation for cost-of-living increases demonstrates the Prime Minister's contempt for self-funded retirees.

The Deputy Prime Minister said that this carbon tax will cause our economy to prosper. Well, he is from Brisbane and lives in the Brisbane City Council area, but he will not explain why one of the largest purchasers of green power in this country, and a council which has spent millions of dollars on real green initiatives, has been branded as one of the top 294 polluters in the country. I encourage him to return to Queensland and explain directly why his government is forcing the Brisbane City Council to pay more than \$15 million in the 2012-13 financial year and forcing their rates up at a time of increasing cost-of-living pressures.

Seniors were ignored in this year's budget. The Gillard government reduced the amount that someone over 50 is able to voluntarily contribute to their superannuation. They introduced means testing of the medical expenses tax offset. They are phasing out the mature age worker tax offset, and they had already abolished the More Help for Mature Age Workers election promise. Instead, they propose to spend an extra \$56.9 million to hold yet another talkfest.

The failure of this Prime Minister to honour her promise before the election that there would be no carbon tax under a government she leads is another example of her lack of commitment to senior Australians. This Labor government have also failed on many other fronts. They opposed the opposition's bill to abolish the superannuation age limit. They have continually failed to listen to the opposition's commitment to the fair indexation of the DFRB and DFRDB schemes for military superannuants. They have failed to support workers experiencing age discrimination. They failed to take up the opposition's commitment to indexing the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card and they have failed to recognise the contribution of self-funded retirees to this country. The coalition will look after senior Australians, as we have always done in government. It was the coalition that ensured the pension would always be maintained at 25 per cent of male total average weekly earnings and that the pension would be indexed to that level rather than the lower CPI. The coalition introduced the utilities allowance to assist seniors to be independent. Not only will the coalition rescind the carbon tax, the coalition if it is elected will implement our Supporting Seniors policy. The coalition will create a Minister for Ageing and Seniors because we want senior Australians to have their voice heard, and because the coalition values their contribution and their input. We want to hear their opinion, while the government obviously does not.

The next election will be a referendum on the carbon tax. Should the coalition be elected by the people of Australia at the next election to form government, my message to the Prime Minister and the Labor-Greens coalition is

simple: 'You ignored the will of the Australian people at the last election; you deceived all Australians. Get out of the way and let the coalition repair the damage you have caused to our economy.'

**Dr Leigh:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order. It is the same point of order as the member for Flinders took earlier. I ask that the member withdraw the allegation of deliberate deception.

**Mrs PRENTICE:** I withdraw it if you want me to, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member for Ryan.

**Mrs PRENTICE:** The coalition has a plan to rescind this disastrous tax. The tax can and will be removed early in the life of a coalition government. By rescinding the government tax, the coalition will once again provide hope, reward and opportunity to all Australians because they need to know about the accuracy of the impact of the carbon tax on all Australians.