



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

ADJOURNMENT

Carbon Pricing

SPEECH

Thursday, 28 June 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Laming, Andrew, MP

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Mr LAMING (Bowman) (11:31): You hear all sorts of things in the chamber. Just yesterday we had the Labor Party—or what is left of the Labor Party—trying to erode human rights through our immigration policy. Today we have a Labor member lauding the maths and science olympiads on the day after they doubled the HELP fees for people who choose to study science and maths. So I say they will be saying, 'Thank you, Member for Bruce, for the adjournment speech but why are you doubling my HELP fees?' They will be saying, 'Why are you hitting us with a carbon tax?' And when they get home, having been sent overseas to Estonia—where they only pay a dollar per person per year for a carbon tax—to be engaged in the wonderful pursuits of maths and science, they will say, 'Thank you for the adjournment speech, but when are you getting rid of the carbon tax?' Let me say that after the next election when this tax is about to be repealed we will see where members on the other side sit when we need to make that decision. Will they quiver and shrivel up with what is left of the Greens or will they come across and vote with the new government and say that this tax was one big fat mistake?

Let us go straight to the electorate of Bowman, where I have in my electorate the largest offshore population in Australia—nearly 5,000 people, many of whom commute every day of the working week through the year to jobs on the mainland. They make 600,000 trips by water taxi. The Prime Minister, in exempting road travel and the fuel cost associated with it, obviously forgot water based travel. These Australians are no less Australians—they are Stradbroke Islanders and they are Southern Moreton Bay Islanders—but they pay a carbon tax on the ferry journey that they take over half a million times a year. It is adding 6c a litre on the diesel that is used there on three million litres of diesel per year. This is yet another prism through which we can look at the impact of the carbon tax for which these islanders will not be compensated.

Just tell me for a moment how the Treasury modelling accounted for Australians living on offshore islands who need to make ferry journeys to the mainland for work? Precisely where in the modelling—show me the line—will they be compensated specifically, over and above it all, for the transport costs that they will face? These are not wealthy Australians. They live in an average \$260,000 household compared to a \$400,000 one on the mainland. They are lower income earners. More of their seniors are in the workforce. There are more people with slightly larger families than on the mainland. Most importantly of all, a large number of people are trying to find work and are moving off the islands to do so. That is where of course the only hope of a lot of employment exists. There is no provision for these forgotten people. To adjust Menzies' words, these are people who have been forgotten by the carbon tax.

We should not just think that you are hit by the carbon tax when you are at work or are going to the shopping centre. Let us also remember the very important work done by the New South Wales and Victorian governments on the impact of the carbon tax on hospital beds, no less. Take the New South Wales government—and don't say they cannot add up just because they had a Labor government that preceded them and racked up a debt. This is a coalition government that commissioned independent research to look at the costs for their hospital system and now this is a state facing a \$26 million carbon tax bill for their 13,496 beds. When you do the maths, it is a \$2,000 bill per bed per year in the health system. Extrapolated to Queensland, where the power prices are only slightly less, thanks to the former Bligh government, my 174-bed Redland base hospital is looking at paying more than a third of a million dollars a year in carbon tax—my local hospital that cares for the ill and the most vulnerable. Where will that money come from? Explain to me where in the wonderful carbon tax churn-go-round is there some form of compensation for my hospital that will pay this ridiculous fee and has no means of recouping it? Does the Labor government propose that we have a boom gate and charge for parking? Does the Labor government suggest that we reduce some services or have no more outreach to the community? No, they do not. There is money going into this, money going into that, but nothing to help us run the hospital or to compensate for those costs. This is just another example.

Wherever you go, from 1 June you will find a coalition member of parliament fighting against this evil and insidious tax. This is not a tax that bears any resemblance to predecessors in other countries. This is not a tax that has caused any other nations to follow in our path. This is simply a post-election conception by a Prime Minister

who had all the choice in the world about whether or not to introduce a carbon tax. What she said before the election is what she wanted to do after. She was not in any way compelled to do this by the Greens. She could have raised her hands and said: 'You know what? I made a promise to the people.' But that is something she never did. She turned to the Greens and said: 'Now we're in, let's change it all. Let's get on with what we really want to do.' That is why, wherever you go, Australians will tell you that at that moment she wrote her political obituary.