



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



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

**Environment**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 24 June 2014**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

---

## SPEECH

**Date** Tuesday, 24 June 2014  
**Page** 7175  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Kelly, Craig, MP

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

**Mr CRAIG KELLY** (Hughes) (15:40): I am pleased to make my contribution to this MPI about protecting Australia's natural environment. I would like to start by suggesting that the most important part of our natural environment is the air that we breathe, because we all have to breathe that air. I would also like at this time to explain how the carbon tax not only damages exports, the economy and job creation; it actually damages our natural environment through damaging the air that we breathe.

To start with, we all know that the carbon tax increases electricity prices. That is what it is designed to do. We know that those on the other side are quite happy to see electricity prices increase because it gives them that warm inner glow. They believe that it will stop the seas from rising, will stop fires and floods and will prevent bad weather. But it also has an effect in New South Wales of increasing electricity prices for consumers. In 2012-13, 24,888 families had their electricity disconnected. In the last six months it has actually got worse. In the first half of this year, in New South Wales alone, 25,900 families had their electricity disconnected simply because they could not afford to pay those increasing bills. That is 25,900 families in New South Wales alone that are seeing their electricity cut off because the electricity prices are too high.

So what happens in parts of Sydney as we move into winter, when the temperatures fall in many parts of Sydney to zero or below, if people have their electricity cut off? They have to find alternative ways to warm their home. One way in which they can warm their home is to burn wood. Today on the radio in Sydney people are advertising wood for sale, for delivery. If you go to almost any garage in Western Sydney, there, piled up at the petrol station, are bags of timber, all cut up, which you can take home and burn. Of course, if you are fortunate enough to live next to some bushland, it is quite easy to go to the bush and collect a bit of wood to take home, to burn to keep your house warm. That is what we see happening.

When people burn wood, yes, you release carbon dioxide. But you also release, of much greater concern, particulate matter. That is the dust, soot and the particles that come out. While we know that CO<sub>2</sub> makes plants grow, particulate matter is deadly. The World Health Organization has designated particulate matter as a carcinogen. It is our deadliest form of air pollution because it actually penetrates deep into the lungs and the bloodstream. Our most eminent scientists have told us that it causes lung cancer, heart disease, premature death and asthma in children. A Danish study in 2003 found there were simply no safe levels of particulate matter and that, for every 10 micrograms per cubic metre of increase in PM<sub>10</sub>, lung cancer rates increased 22 per cent. It is even worse for the smaller particulate matter 2.5. For every 10 micrograms increase, that study found a 36 per cent increase in lung cancer. A more recent study done earlier this year, reported in the *British Medical Journal*, estimated that an annual exposure of PM<sub>2.5</sub> of just five micrograms per cubic metre is linked to a 13 per cent increase in heart disease.

So we are making electricity dearer, we are forcing people to burn wood, because that is all they can afford—they cannot afford to turn on their heater—and that is releasing particulate matter in Western Sydney. It is of particular concern in Western Sydney because of the unique nature of our topography. We know that particulate matter gets trapped in there for days and days. In fact, over the last few years we have seen a significant and dangerous increase in particulate matter in Western Sydney. In fact, last year in Liverpool we were above the World Health Organization's recommended standard of PM<sub>10</sub>. We were also above the World Health Organization standard of PM<sub>10</sub>. This is simple. The major component of that particulate matter as measured by ANSTO is people burning wood from their fireplace. There is a clear link. As we increase electricity prices through the carbon tax we find more people burning wood to keep themselves warm and we are getting more particulate matter in the atmosphere. That is causing death and disease; it is harming the environment. That is why the carbon tax must go.