



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



## **THE SENATE**

### **RENEWABLE ENERGY (ELECTRICITY) AMENDMENT BILL 2009**

### **RENEWABLE ENERGY (ELECTRICITY) (CHARGE) AMENDMENT BILL 2009**

**In Committee**

## **SPEECH**

**Thursday, 20 August 2009**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 20 August 2009  
**Page** 5523  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Fielding, Sen Steve

**Source** Senate  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Senator FIELDING** (Victoria—Leader of the Family First Party) (10.48 am)—It is interesting to listen to this debate. Why are we moving an exemption here for food processing? It is because we are concerned about the escalating price of electricity for food processing—the extra cost. Here we are, standing up for food processing. We have seen the coalition roll on getting something for aluminium. Some of the other industries are still very nervous about it. Food processing misses out because the Nationals went missing, and here they are trying to get some scraps off the table and scrambling around the chamber trying to get enough votes to guarantee that they are looked after. But, no—they were sold out. The Nationals should not have agreed. How can they stay in with the coalition when they are selling out food processing, which is in rural and regional areas? It is a disgrace. Where are your principles on this one? You have sold them out. Mums and dads are being sold out because the electricity prices are going to go through the roof. I tell them they can send their bills to the Prime Minister, but he is not going to pay either.

We needed to look at this issue a lot harder. We have had a week since the Senate report was out. There are other models that maybe we should be considering; rather than getting mums and dads, the dairy industry and the food processing to foot the bill for risky renewable energy. I am for renewable energy. Let us be simple here. The sun shines, and if we can get it from the sun, why not? If we can get it from the wind—the wind blows. If we can get it from a hot core in the earth, by all means do so. But do you know how much these cost? People out there genuinely think it is free. I have spoken to people on the street and they think this is free. They think renewables are a great idea because the sun shines and the wind blows. They do—they are great ideas. But do you know how much they are going to cost? They cost a lot of money. They are not viable. Wind energy is not viable. Solar energy is not viable. Geothermal is not viable. They are expensive and they are propped up with subsidies. And who is paying those subsidies? The mums and dads of Australia are paying.

And here we are worried about the food processing industry. We should be worried about mums and dads. We should be worried about all the others. They have been sold out by the coalition. You did not have the guts or the stamina to hold on even longer because you are worried about holding this bill up and coming back to it a second time. You are making sure. Many years ago, when we invested in energy for electricity, the government took the risk—not mums and dads. They were state owned. We have had no debate about this at all. Even yesterday we were debating and saying: ‘Look, we have got to keep some aside for geothermal because we have got wind and solar. And, even though it is attractive, it will not do base load.’ This is a dog’s breakfast, seriously. We are passing this, and we are putting our hands into our pockets for the investors and the bankers, and mums and dads are footing the bill. I will support this amendment but we should not have been supporting the rest of it. It is disgraceful. It is a dog’s breakfast.