



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

BILLS

**Clean Energy Bill 2011, Clean Energy
(Consequential Amendments) Bill 2011, Clean
Energy (Income Tax Rates Amendments) Bill
2011, Clean Energy (Household Assistance
Amendments) Bill 2011, Clean Energy
(Tax Laws Amendments) Bill 2011, Clean
Energy (Fuel Tax Legislation Amendment)
Bill 2011, Clean Energy (Customs Tariff
Amendment) Bill 2011, Clean Energy (Excise
Tariff Legislation Amendment) Bill 2011,
Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse
Gas (Import Levy) Amendment Bill 2011,
Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse
Gas (Manufacture Levy) Amendment Bill**

**2011, Clean Energy (Unit Shortfall Charge—
General) Bill 2011, Clean Energy (Unit Issue
Charge—Auctions) Bill 2011, Clean Energy
(Unit Issue Charge—Fixed Charge) Bill 2011,
Clean Energy (International Unit Surrender
Charge) Bill 2011, Clean Energy (Charges—
Customs) Bill 2011, Clean Energy (Charges
—Excise) Bill 2011, Clean Energy Regulator
Bill 2011, Climate Change Authority Bill 2011**

In Committee

SPEECH

Monday, 7 November 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

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Questioner
Speaker Nash, Sen Fiona

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Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (17:45): I was going to stand up and just directly ask some questions but I cannot help but comment on the fact that, the government having given us an extraordinarily truncated opportunity to deal with the committee stage for these bills, we have now seen for the second time today Senator Thistlethwaite jumping up and contributing to this particular part of the process. That is just extraordinary. There is absolutely no reason, apart from padding out some sort of filibuster—goodness knows why—for this from the senator on the other side, who did not even ask a question. It is just another example of the process of this place having gone completely pear shaped under this government. On the one hand on the other side they say: 'Hurry up, hurry up. Let's get all this done with. You know you are going to vote against it. Why are you even talking about this, coalition?' And yet we have senators on the government side coming in and blithering on with not so much as a question at the end of it all. That is an extraordinary way for a government to run the chamber.

I would like to raise a few issues here as part of looking at the amendment put by my very good colleague Senator Birmingham on behalf of the coalition around the very fact that the government should wait until after the next election to introduce a carbon tax. I know we have canvassed this before, so I am not going to go into it at length, but it just seems absolutely extraordinary that the government and the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, will not wait until after another election to bring this carbon tax in. Why not? I wonder why not, colleagues. We all know why not. She is not game to take it to the Australian people because the people out there across these communities are saying loud and clear that they do not want a carbon tax.

The Prime Minister said before the last election, 'There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead.' In his comments earlier, Senator Xenophon was a little bit magnanimous in his view that it was not actually a lie to the Australian people. I think it was a lie to the Australian people. Regardless of that, Senator Xenophon agreed that—

Senator Pratt: Madam Temporary Chairman, I rise on a point of order. I believe that Senator Nash is breaching standing order 193 in making that remark.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Senator Moore): The debate has gone very widely in this area. I do not think there is a point of order, but I draw Senator Nash's attention to the issue at hand.

Senator NASH: Interestingly, Senator Xenophon is supporting this amendment to not have a carbon tax start until after the next election. So regardless of your view as to the intent of what the Prime Minister said before the last election, the Australian people deserve to be able to have a say on this piece of legislation, which they have been denied by the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and the Labor government. That is just simply wrong. That is why we are moving this amendment. It is so the Australian people can have their voices heard and have their say, because, goodness knows, they have not had an opportunity to do that up until now. Obviously, with the Greens and Labor banding together in their usual coalition form, it looks like they still will not get a say. We can tell that this amendment is not going to be successful. Much as we hoped it would be, we can tell it is not going to be successful.

One of the things about this legislation, this carbon tax, is the impost that it is going to place on our agricultural communities. It is quite extraordinary. The government like to say that agriculture is not included. When they say that, they refuse to properly and correctly say that agricultural emissions are not included. I can tell you, colleagues, as you all well know, the financial burden that is going to be faced by our farmers because of the introduction of this carbon tax is going to be huge. Electricity, fuel, fertiliser and transport will be affected, just for starters. There is nowhere for those costs to be passed on to. Farmers are the bottom of the food chain and there is nowhere for those costs to be passed on to. That might not be a concern for the government but that greatly concerns me and my colleagues on this side of the chamber in the coalition.

I would like to ask the minister if she could perhaps enlighten the chamber on what modelling has been done to determine the average electricity cost increase across the farming community. I understand the minister may not have specific details, but I am interested in even just an average cost increase across those communities. Also, what assistance, if any, has been considered by the government or is in place to assist those farmers with the increased electricity costs?