



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

SENATE

Hansard

TUESDAY, 26 JUNE 2012

CORRECTIONS

This is a **PROOF ISSUE**. Suggested corrections for the Official Hansard and Bound Volumes should be lodged in writing with the Director, Chambers, Department of Parliamentary Services **as soon as possible but not later than:**

Tuesday, 3 July 2012

Facsimile: Senate	(02) 6277 2977
House of Representatives	(02) 6277 2944
Main Committee	(02) 6277 2944

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

PROOF

country. And what for? The impacts on regional communities are going to be severe. Our dairy industry is going to be hit, and so will rice farmers and irrigators. Irrigators' electricity bills are going to go through the roof. This government just do not care about rural Australia. They do not have a clue. They are so disconnected from people outside the cities that they simply cannot understand what is needed out there. I can tell you, Mr Deputy President, that what is not needed is a carbon tax. We on this side of the chamber will not stand by. We will get rid of it in government for all Australians. *(Time expired)*

Senator CROSSIN (Northern Territory) (15:17): What is extraordinary in this chamber day after day is the group of people across the other side in the coalition wanting to rehash the arguments about tackling climate change. That is really the fundamental grassroots problem that we have with the people opposite.

Senator Abetz: No, it's the promise of no carbon tax.

Senator CROSSIN: Senator Abetz, you would be the best of them. The problem is that you do not actually believe there is any need to take action on climate change at all. That is the problem—that we still have opposite us a bunch of deniers, a bunch of people who do not believe there is a need to take any action on climate change at all, despite the fact that prior to the 2007 election Mr Howard's and the coalition's policy was to take action.

We have been in this chamber since question time, and 20 minutes have passed since question time expired. We have seen a hopping Senator Joyce, hopping all the time. The only difference between you and Danny Kaye, Senator Joyce, is you do not wear a court jester outfit like Danny Kaye used to do in the movies.

But we never really hear any explanation from the other side about what they might do. What they fail to tell the Australian public is that they have a target of five per cent by 2020. You have a plan to introduce legislation that replaces our legislation. So let us be honest about this. Instead of playing to the little audience of six around you, let us play to the gallery. Let us play to the people listening to the broadcast. What you do not tell the Australian public is that you plan to replace this legislation.

You will take money off families. You will slug families \$1,300 a year. You will expect your farmers, Senator Nash, and your aluminium workers, Senator Joyce, to dip into their pockets, into their household budgets, to pay you \$1,300 a year so that you can pass that on to the big polluters. You actually think that by giving the big polluters more money in their budgets somehow you will magically change their behaviour. Your policy is to reward the big polluters in some

magical hope they will say: 'Thanks for the cash from families. We'll now try and reduce our carbon emissions.'

You are totally dishonest with the Australian public. You are totally dishonest with the people who are listening to you on the broadcast. You talk about repealing this legislation but you never, ever mention the 'PS' at the bottom of the piece of paper, the fine print that says: 'We're going to replace it with our own plan.' You have a five per cent reduction target by 2020, the same as us. You never stump up and admit that. The hopping little Senator Joyce never, ever admits that. The other thing you do not admit is that you are going to slug families. You are going to make families pay for your plan. What you are hoping is that when big polluters get this bucket of money they will suddenly say, 'Thanks for the cash—now we're going to change our mind and change what we do.'

What we have decided to do is to force the big polluters to change their behaviour, and the way we do that is by pricing carbon. They are going to pay for the carbon they put into the atmosphere. We have said that we will compensate and we have started to compensate households, families and pensioners around the country. After all the scaremongering that you do, all the diatribe that we hear in this chamber, it is time for you to stump up and be honest with the Australian people about exactly what you are planning to do.

Come next Sunday, people will realise that the plan we have in place is smart, is sensible. People, particularly young people, said that they wanted a government to tackle the big reforms in this country. They want a government that is going to protect the environment. They want a government that is going to embark on tackling climate change and they will realise that this is the way to do it. Your plan is to unwind all the assistance, take it off them, slug them even further and somehow think that magically big polluters will change their behaviour. Senator Nash, that is what is stupid. *(Time expired)*

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Before I call Senator McKenzie, I remind senators to direct their comments to the chair and not across the chamber.

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria) (15:22): Through you, Mr Deputy President, I rise to take note of all answers to all questions asked by coalition senators. With five days to go, the continuing denial and arrogance of this Labor government beggars belief. I would like to draw the attention of the Senate to the young people Senator Crossin mentioned and how they feel about this tax and our plans for addressing climate change. What the government needs to understand is that Australians actually do not want the carbon tax. They did not vote for it. They are screaming from their rooftops and through poll after poll and letters to the editor that they do not want it. What the young people

here today in our parliament are here to learn is that we live in a democracy. Our role as representatives in our democracy is to reflect the will of the people and conduct ourselves in a way that allows the will of the people to be expressed. Time and time again, this Labor government simply does not get it right.

What the Australian people do know is that this carbon tax will severely affect our international competitiveness. I heard reference to the international perspective on this particular issue. We know that in three months under this current proposal Australians will pay what the Europeans have paid in over six years. Those are the sorts of brakes we are talking about putting on the Australian economy. In his answer, Minister Kim Carr asked us a question: why do we oppose these payments? It is because—and we will not talk about the self-funded retirees—there is no environmental gain to be had from these payments. The reason we oppose them is that we oppose waste. It is quite simple.

Small business is nowhere in the government's response to this. In fact, they are trying to gag small business on the very real impacts that this tax will have on running a small business in this country, with fines of \$1.1 million.

Senator Crossin interjecting—

Senator McKENZIE: Dairy farmers are nowhere, Senator Crossin, and you know it. You know the impost that this particular tax will have on that sector of the agricultural industry, a huge contributor to exporters in my own state, and you have nothing for them—\$5,000 to \$7,000 per year just for getting the milk out the farm gate, let alone the processing costs, the transport costs and the refrigeration costs come 2014. Employees in the food-processing sector and employees in trucking from 2014 are nowhere in your plan.

A third of Australians live outside the capital cities and, once again, Labor have demonstrated so clearly that they do not get us. They demonstrate that they simply do not get us in policy after policy. Whether it is youth allowance, education or health, they have nothing for us outside capital cities. We are passionate about our environment. We live in it and we work with it every single day of our lives, and yet here we are bearing the brunt yet again of Labor's failed policies. Our councils are bearing the brunt of your policies. For Wagga Wagga it is \$660,000. In Bendigo in my own home state it is \$1.2 million, reflective of a potential 1.7 per cent increase in rates for local Bendigonians.

This will affect our exporters. Forty thousand people are directly employed by the dairy industry, and the largest exporter off our docks every day in Victoria—and I see Senator Kroger and Senator Fifield, fellow Victorians, are here—is Murray-Goulburn, a dairy producer. This will affect our social way of life out in

the regions. We use our cars a lot to get to football games, hospitals and community meetings. We use a lot of petrol or diesel. This will impact on our social way of life. Most importantly for us, our industries, such as our abattoirs and the food-manufacturing sector—the largest manufacturing sector in Australia with 225,000 employees, most of them located in the regions—will be severely impacted by this Labor Party policy.

Minister Wong skiting about ALP investment in regional Australia is a farce because when you are on the side of politics that counts everywhere as regional Australia it just makes the comment a real joke. I love the Cats, but \$10 million for Skilled Stadium just does not fly in Strathfield or Seymour. We are over it. Australians know the carbon tax is a con. It is not going to change behaviour. Most concerning is that it is not going to assist the environment or change the climate.

Question agreed to.

Great Barrier Reef

Senator WATERS (Queensland) (15:27): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (Senator Conroy) to a question without notice asked by Senator Waters today relating to the Great Barrier Reef.

The minister attempted to answer me, although the pre-written response on his computer screen did not actually address the question that I had. He made some comments about the strategic assessment, and I am really pleased he raised those because there seems to be a bit of a misunderstanding in the government ranks about the real effect of this so-called comprehensive strategic assessment of the reef. It actually is not comprehensive at all and will ultimately result in accrediting state laws, meaning Premier Newman will be in charge. This is the guy who has described World Heritage as a problem for the Queensland coast rather than acknowledging the fact that it brings in \$5.1 billion in tourist revenue and employs 54,000 people.

So I was a bit bemused that Senator Conroy rejected the premise of my question when I asked him whether or not the government were finally going to strengthen this so-called comprehensive strategic assessment to make sure that it can apply to development applications that are currently on foot. Of course, it will not, making it a completely toothless tiger and making a mockery of the term 'comprehensive'. So I would be pleased if Senator Conroy could take that up with Minister Burke, because it really goes to the heart of whether, in response to UNESCO's extreme concerns and the very strong decision that the World Heritage Committee are voting on tomorrow night, the government is properly responding. This is potentially an international embarrassment in the making. This is