



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**



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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**CARBON POLLUTION  
REDUCTION SCHEME BILL 2009**

**CARBON POLLUTION REDUCTION  
SCHEME (CONSEQUENTIAL  
AMENDMENTS) BILL 2009**

**AUSTRALIAN CLIMATE CHANGE  
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**CARBON POLLUTION REDUCTION  
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**CARBON POLLUTION  
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**CREDITS) (CONSEQUENTIAL  
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**EXCISE TARIFF AMENDMENT  
(CARBON POLLUTION  
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**Second Reading**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 3 June 2009**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Wednesday, 3 June 2009  
**Page** 23  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Thomson, Kelvin, MP

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

**Mr KELVIN THOMSON** (Wills) (11.08 am)—This is the second time in two days that I have followed the member for Kennedy in debate, which is vaguely troubling. Firstly, I want to pay tribute to all the community groups—GetUp!, the climate action groups like the Moreland Climate Group in my own electorate of Wills, the Climate Institute and so many others—who have been drawing the attention of climate change and global heating to us politicians so forcefully and passionately. Global heating is the moral challenge of our time. I have no doubt about it. You would have to go back to the end of World War II to think of a more important international event than the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference to be held in December this year. Australia cannot go to that conference with empty hands. We must go to that conference and tell other countries that drastic action is needed to cut carbon emissions in the coming decades. We cannot look at the leaders of other countries in the eye and demand that they cut their emissions unless we are cutting ours. That is why this Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Bill 2009, and related legislation, is so important and must be passed.

At present we are not cutting our carbon emissions. They are going up. I repeat: they are going up. Just yesterday, we learned that Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions in 2008 were 1.1 per cent higher than in 2007. A rise in excess of one per cent has been happening every year throughout this decade. We are tracking for carbon levels 20 per cent above the 2000 levels by 2020. It is both government policy and opposition policy to cut carbon levels by between five per cent and 25 per cent by 2020 compared with the year 2000. That represents a turnaround between 25 per cent and 45 per cent compared with what we are tracking for now over an 11-year period. To meet it, we have to turn around our emissions by two per cent, three per cent or four per cent every year. I believe this is achievable, but the change must be dramatic to do it. Firstly, emissions must be stopped from going up. We must stabilise our emissions during 2009 and 2010. How on earth is this going to happen without this legislation being passed? The opposition say, 'Let's delay, let's wait until after Copenhagen.' I put it to the House that they always have a reason for delay. They never say, 'Let's act now.'

This has been going on for 20 years. Twenty years ago scientists were telling us that action needed

to be taken. In 1990, the United Nations Advisory Group on Greenhouse Gases said that temperature increases beyond one degree Celsius may 'elicit rapid, unpredictable and non-linear responses that could lead to extensive ecosystem damage'. We were told 20 years ago to keep temperatures down to a one-degree Celsius rise, and sea level down to a 20-millimetre per decade rise. Over 10 years ago the Liberal and National parties started saying action was needed. In September 1998, a federal parliamentary inquiry into greenhouse gas emissions, chaired by a National Party MP, recommended a trial emissions trading scheme in Australia, saying that a scheme should include as many carbon sinks, emissions sources and greenhouse gases as possible, be national, be underpinned by national legislation and be integrated with an international trading regime. In 1999—again 10 years ago—the Howard government's Australian Greenhouse Office announced that it was undertaking a feasibility study on the introduction of a national emissions trading scheme. The Liberal government and a National Party chaired parliamentary committee undertook this study over 10 years ago and still those opposite say that now is not the right time. It will never be the right time for them. They are totally and utterly insincere on the issue of global heating. They prevaricate and they come up with every excuse in the book. It is all spin, rhetoric and cant—anything and everything except action.

The second thing that caught my eyes in the news yesterday was General Motors in America going into bankruptcy. For years, General Motors in America has been a dinosaur, building petrol-guzzling vehicles and opposing efforts to mandate vehicle fuel efficiency standards. Now it is bankrupt because it failed to see where petrol prices were going and it failed to see where consumers were going. It simply stuck its head in the sand. I urge Australian car manufacturers not to do this. People claim that tackling climate change will cost jobs. The truth is that there are tens of thousands of jobs in cutting our carbon pollution and moving to the low-carbon economy. Our car manufacturers should think seriously about manufacturing cars that run only on electricity. China, Israel and Denmark are. Australia should also think about this. Shai Agassi is a former senior executive at the international software giant SAP. He has produced a business plan involving the construction of car battery recharging stations at parking spaces and billing motorists online for the electricity they use. Fully charged cars would be

able to travel around 160 kilometres, and for longer trips motorists would pull into stations resembling car washes and exchange their spent batteries for new ones.

Shai Agassi is head of the Silicon Valley based company Better Place. He has raised \$200 million and entered into agreements with Israel, Denmark and a number of United States governments such as Hawaii. Under these agreements, Renault-Nissan will provide electric cars to Israel, using the Better Place business model by 2010. Under the Better Place model, consumers can either buy or lease an electric car from the French auto maker Renault or the Japanese car maker Nissan and then purchase miles on their electric car batteries from Better Place the way people purchase mobile phone time from a mobile phone carrier. Cars would be sold at a relatively low price and owners charged operating fees. The total cost of owning an electric car, including the up-front prices and ongoing operating expenses, is expected to be less than that for a conventional car.

China has moved to become the leading producer of hybrid and all-electric vehicles within three years. China is, of course, behind the United States, Japan and other countries when it comes to making gas powered vehicles, but it is skipping the current technology and hoping to get a jump on the next one. China plans to create a world-leading industry producing jobs and exports, reducing urban pollution and decreasing its dependence on the Middle East for oil. Australian car manufacturers should be looking at this technology and governments should encourage them to do so. Indeed, there is scope for governments to assist an electric car infrastructure rollout. This is one infrastructure rollout which would reduce carbon emissions.

People may worry about electric cars producing carbon. Of course our present methods of electricity generation produce massive carbon emissions, but by moving to solar, wind, geothermal and other carbon-free methods of producing electricity this would not be so. Drivers would be freed of petrol price fluctuations, and Australia would get cleaner air, a sustainable future for our car industry, dramatically reduced carbon emissions, an improved trade balance and energy independence. It is a no-brainer, and it is just one example of how we should be planning to change to a low-carbon economy. There are many others. In forestry and biosequestration—with people like Rob Gell leading the way—energy efficiency, solar power, wind power and geothermal power there will be jobs and there will be prosperity in making this change.

The jury came in years ago on climate change and it keeps on returning its verdict—through droughts and bushfires in Victoria and floods in Queensland and New South Wales. It has already claimed thousands of lives around the world, and millions are now at

risk. There has been deadly flooding in India, cyclones and storm surges in the Pacific islands, typhoons in Korea, heatwaves in the south of France and drought in Ethiopia and in African countries leading to mass starvation. Back in 2007 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that global greenhouse emissions must peak by 2015 and thereafter rapidly decline. It said any delay—I stress ‘any delay’—will considerably increase the risk of species extinction, water scarcity, food shortages, extreme weather, major health risks and swelling numbers of climate refugees. That is the legacy those opposite would have us leave our children and our grandchildren. How ironic it is that our farmers are now leaving an arid land rendered useless by the policies pursued by the very people they elected to represent and look after them. I urge the House to support these bills.