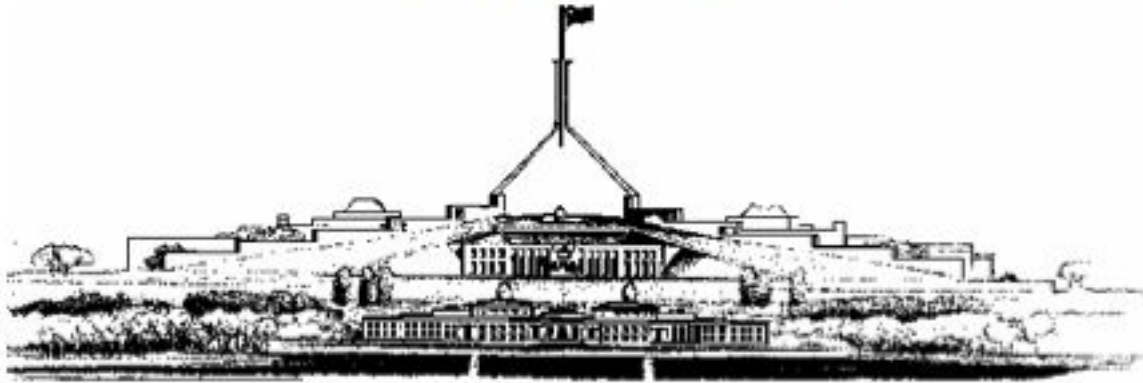




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**CARBON POLLUTION  
REDUCTION SCHEME BILL 2010**

**CARBON POLLUTION REDUCTION  
SCHEME (CONSEQUENTIAL  
AMENDMENTS) BILL 2010**

**AUSTRALIAN CLIMATE CHANGE  
REGULATORY AUTHORITY BILL 2010**

**CARBON POLLUTION REDUCTION  
SCHEME (CHARGES—CUSTOMS) BILL 2010**

**CARBON POLLUTION REDUCTION  
SCHEME (CHARGES—EXCISE) BILL 2010**

**CARBON POLLUTION REDUCTION  
SCHEME (CHARGES—GENERAL) BILL 2010**

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**CARBON POLLUTION REDUCTION  
SCHEME (CPRS FUEL CREDITS) BILL 2010**

**CARBON POLLUTION  
REDUCTION SCHEME (CPRS FUEL  
CREDITS) (CONSEQUENTIAL  
AMENDMENTS) BILL 2010**

**EXCISE TARIFF AMENDMENT  
(CARBON POLLUTION  
REDUCTION SCHEME) BILL 2010**

**CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT  
(CARBON POLLUTION  
REDUCTION SCHEME) BILL 2010**

**CARBON POLLUTION REDUCTION  
SCHEME AMENDMENT (HOUSEHOLD  
ASSISTANCE) BILL 2010**

**Second Reading**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 4 February 2010**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 4 February 2010  
**Page** 447  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Robert, Stuart, MP

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

**Mr ROBERT** (Fadden) (12.17 pm)—The nation expects its leaders to act on climate change, and act in good faith the coalition will—not act to export problems, not act to disadvantage our nation, not act to redistribute wealth amongst nations and not act to create an independent funding stream for any world bodies, but act against the risk that the climate is changing. As the coalition moves to act it does not do so as a single event or point in time. Indeed, the previous Howard government was one of the first to act. Notwithstanding the Kyoto protocol and notwithstanding the Howard government's failure to sign it, we were one of only a few countries in the world that actually met our Kyoto targets, even though we had not signed the protocol. The question must be asked: what is more important—to achieve the ends of the protocol or to blindly sign it with no intention at all of achieving the targets?

The Howard government was one of the first governments in the world to establish an office of climate change when it first came into government, taking the issue seriously and beginning the process of action. Today the coalition continues to act, as we have done for the past 13 years, beginning with the Howard government. Today I rise to lend a voice to the coalition to say that we will once again vote against the government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Bill 2009 and cognate bills. This is the third time I have spoken against this legislation and the third time I will vote against it. Voting against this legislation does not mean that we are voting not to act. It simply means that we believe the government's scheme is fatally and utterly flawed.

We believe the nation deserves a choice. The nation deserves to choose which approach they believe will actually achieve the ends we need. It is a choice between direct action, measures that are simple and understandable, or a great big tax on everything. The choice could not be more stark, and as we go to an election year that choice will be full and frank before the Australian people: direct action to achieve environmental aims and to address the risk of climate change or a big fat new tax.

The coalition's direct action is an incentive based approach. It is affordable, it is practical and it has widespread benefits that will help reduce environmental degradation as well as carbon

emissions. We believe that a sound policy in this space should encompass more than just dealing with the issue of the risk of climate change. It should also deal with the issues that have been plaguing our environment for some time. So I agree we need to act. If we move forward on a sensible path that leads to a cleaner environment, to cleaner air and to greater organic content of soils that produce greater yields; if we end up with a result of greener cities, of zero reliance on Middle Eastern oil, of greater use of renewables and of less reliance on fossil fuels; if we achieve all of this and in 30 years time for whatever reason the science of climate change is proved incorrect, we still will have produced an outstanding result for the people of this nation. I would rather we went for direct action with no regrets rather than a big fat tax on everything. The government's proposed emissions trading scheme, reintroduced again, remains flawed in its current form. It will cost Australian jobs, it will cost Australian investment and it will simply export rather than reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.

Indeed to see the hypocrisy of this government you need look no further than at the issue of the export of uranium to India. Right now India's High Commissioner to Australia, Her Excellency Mrs Singh, is en route back to India because of the issues that this government has caused in our diplomatic relations. There is no question that India is seeking to address its climate change footprint. Currently three per cent of its energy is generated by nuclear power. The Indian government has a vision of 25 per cent of its energy being generated by nuclear power. Yet Australia will not sell uranium to India. Australia is holding back India from achieving some of its environmental outcomes and seeking to reduce its climate footprint on the planet. At the same time, the Prime Minister comes in here and lectures Australians about what should occur. Canada of course has picked up the slack with respect to exporting uranium to India. If this Prime Minister is serious about addressing climate change then he needs to be serious about looking at things like exporting uranium to India. We know that there is no sound reason not to do it apart from the pathetic public spat within the Labor Party itself.

Right now we are facing a range of price increases across the nation. If we look at the year to December 2009, the December quarter just passed, we see that in the last year the price of electricity has risen by 15.7

per cent across the nation, water and sewerage by 14 per cent, gas by eight per cent, running a motor vehicle by six per cent, and preschool and early school by 7.5 per cent. That is not a bad record for a government that came in, in 2007, promising to reduce the cost of living. Of course, we are used to schemes like Fuelwatch being littered across the floor of the House, and GroceryWatch, another failed attempt to look at the issue of the rising cost of living. The ABS data that came out yesterday shows that in the last three months alone the cost of a basket of groceries in Sydney went up by \$10. That is for the last three months alone. There is no evidence that this government has attempted or achieved any reduction in the cost of living or the price of groceries. Indeed all of the evidence points to these prices going up. Core inflation in the December quarter was 3.4 per cent, which is indicative perhaps of reckless and wilful spending.

So the question the Australian people face is which choice to go with—direct action on climate change or a great big new tax? It is a stark choice, and it is a choice which deserves attention here in the House of Representatives whilst we look at the government's great big new tax bill. The coalition's policy of direct action centres around an emissions reduction fund—a \$2.5 billion fund through to the out years, starting in mid-2011 and going out for four years—to invest an annual amount of \$1.2 billion to provide incentives for businesses to reach the target of reducing carbon emissions by five per cent by 2020. That is the target which has bipartisan support within the parliament. The coalition will look at tendering for projects that will reduce carbon emissions and that will deliver practical environmental benefits that all Australians understand and can enjoy. More importantly, the intent is not to result in price increases to consumers, not to result in job losses and not to proceed without fund assistance. The coalition is committed to keeping the emissions reduction fund at \$1.2 billion out to 2020 to achieve that end state.

Likewise the coalition believe that we should actually be embracing the core parts of our nation like the sun and the soil. We have an opportunity for a once-in-a-generation replenishment of soils. Australia has over seven million square kilometres of land. Allan Yeoman, who wrote *Priority One*, believes we could pull out all of the carbon dioxide we have put into the atmosphere through increasing the level of organic material in our soil. He writes:

Soil humus and soil organic matter is mainly decomposed plant life and is 58% carbon. The only source of carbon life on the planet is the carbon dioxide in the air. We have to turn atmospheric carbon dioxide into humus as cheaply and as efficiently as possible. We are then recreating soil fertility, a process that has been happening for years. We just help the process instead of hindering it.

He continues:

It is simple and easy to increase the organic matter content of soil and so sequester carbon dioxide from the air. Our world's agricultural land areas are more than ample to return atmospheric carbon dioxide levels to normal. We have to raise the organic matter content of the world's soil we cultivate and manage by 1.6% and the greenhouse problems now destabilising world climates and weather systems will vanish.

He also writes that, if just the US grain belt somehow managed throughout the next decade to recreate deep soil with a 20 per cent organic matter content, the carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere of the entire world would be returned to a safe pre-industrial era level. He is a world-leading expert on soil carbon, on keyline farming and on the use of equipment and ploughs for keyline tillage. He makes it very clear that improving soil carbon increases farm productivity, increases water efficiency and, more importantly, is fundamental to sequester carbon from the atmosphere. We have a once-in-a-century opportunity right now to invest time, money and technology in improving the organic content of our soils—to replenish the organic matter in our soils, to increase the humus content in our soils and thus sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

We also have an opportunity to use one of our other great endowments: the sun. We believe the coalition's policy can open up a new 'solar sunrise' for our great nation. We have a vision of a million solar panels on roofs across the country—one million by 2020 with either solar power or solar hot water. To achieve that we will look at providing an incentive to people. Rather than walking around with a mighty big stick to punish the nation through a great big new tax we will actually provide an extra \$1,000 rebate on top of what already exists to encourage Australians to be part of the solution, to empower Australians to look after their environment and to answer the great question that Australians ask: what can I do? Australians can do a lot, and providing incentives to put solar panels on roofs will do an enormous amount.

We will look at solar towns and solar schools initiatives to create a competitive tendering process for towns and non-capital cities to access direct solar energy. We will look at geothermal and tidal towns, again accessing \$50 million from the geothermal and tidal towns initiative to support additional renewable energy opportunities. We know Australian towns and Australian people are inventive—they are creative. They have built their towns and sustained them through some of the most dreadful climatic conditions in our nation's history, in pre- and post-industrial times. We know that Australians have the ingenuity, the creativity, the wherewithal and the courage to find

solutions to these problems. We will also be looking at a study of high-voltage underground cabling to put cables under the ground and reuse the land underneath those high-voltage powerlines for trees and other things.

Importantly, we believe in green corridors and urban forests. We will facilitate the planting of a minimum of 20 million trees by 2020, mobilising Tony Abbott's green army to get trees planted. But this is a minimum. I can envisage a nation empowered by direct action, a nation that can answer that great question: what can I do? I can put a solar panel on a roof. I can look at using low-voltage lights. I can turn off TVs at the power point. I can use low-water appliances. And I can get out there and plant a tree or two for every member of my family. Imagine if a nation of 21 million people decided to plant a tree or two trees for each person, families taking responsibility for their backyards. This is what the coalition's direct action is all about—not only addressing the risk of climate change but also providing incentives for great environmental outcomes at exactly the same time. We believe Australians have the capacity, the courage and the wherewithal to join the coalition in taking direct action for our nation.

We do not believe in a big government approach. We do not believe that government is the answer to all of our questions. As opposed to Mr Rudd, we do not believe that government should be at the centre of the economy. We believe that individual people within individual homes in their communities, rising up to take individual responsibility in concert with assistance from government can make the difference we need. We have a stark choice this year: direct action to address the risk of climate change and to achieve environmental outcomes versus a great big new tax. Therefore we will be voting against the bill. It is clearly not supportable. It is not in the best interests of the nation. I look forward to our nation rising up to understand and to accept that direct action is the way forward.