

3 June 2009

# CARON POLLUTION REDUCTION SCHEME BILL 2009

## Second Reading

**Mr BRADBURY» (Lindsay) (8:50 PM)** —It is with great pride that I rise to support the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Bill 2009 and related bills, which will progress this nation's efforts to confront the challenges of climate change. On reflection, I look back just a few years ago. I recall in my previous occupation as a solicitor being required to undertake some research in relation to this thing called an emissions trading system. I recall undertaking some research on the internet. I went to the website of the Australian Greenhouse Office. I was stunned to see that going back to the 1990s there were some serious discussion papers in relation to the establishment of an emissions trading scheme.

It begs the question why, when so much work had been undertaken at such an early stage, when we consider the international environment and the debate and negotiations that led to Kyoto, it took so long for this nation to move to the next stage, the stage that we have now reached. The Rudd government is introducing a series of bills, a package of legislation, that does what should have been done many years ago, and that is to introduce something in the nature of an emissions trading scheme—in this case, the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

It says to me that there was, over the 12 lost years of the former government, a lost opportunity. At a time when we as a nation were benefiting so greatly from the boom in commodity prices and the international economic expansion throughout that period—a time of great prosperity—what a lost opportunity it was that we did not seize that opportunity to introduce the sort of economy-wide, society-wide reform that is contained within these bills, to set our country, our economy and our society up for the challenges that we face in tackling climate change and adapting our economy to meet the changes associated with that transition. Unfortunately, there was a lot of delay. Upon coming to office, we had a commitment to delivering those commitments that we had made prior to the last election.

There has been a deferral of the introduction of the scheme as proposed within these bills. I have to say that I am very supportive of the amended proposal that sees a delay in the start date. I think it is the appropriate thing for us to do in the context of the current economic challenges that we are facing, when the international economy is facing the steepest, most protracted, most synchronised global recession in 75 years. With that comes some challenges and also some opportunities. On the one hand, the challenge is that to introduce a massive reform of this scale at this point in time is something that many of us would balk at. I think there is some concern in the community that in the current climate we need to be responsive to the needs of industry and to those areas of the economy where jobs may be vulnerable. But, on the other hand, there is a great opportunity, the opportunity that comes with undertaking, through this period of international economic crisis, some of the hard yards, the serious reforms, that will restructure our economy. The reforms that we are proposing fit in very nicely with our broader agenda of investing in the nation-building infrastructure that will set our economy and society up for the future, to

take advantage of the recovery phase when we as a nation have moved through the economic challenges we are currently facing.

The government is taking strong action to tackle climate change whilst also making sure that the targets that we put in place are appropriate and responsible given the need to support the economy and jobs during this global recession. The Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, as proposed in these bills, is proposed to commence in 2011 and will, for the first time, put a cost on carbon pollution. That will no doubt encourage major polluters, indeed polluters right across the spectrum, to lower their emissions. As part of the scheme, a large part of the funds raised by the issue of permits will be used to assist households as they seek to grapple with the transition to the new set of arrangements that will set our nation up for a low-carbon future. Combined with this is an investment in green technologies, those technologies that will also help us take advantage of what I think is now an inevitable move across this globe towards recognising our obligations to protect our global environment and to reduce our emissions.

I would like to spend a few moments on how these bills might have an impact on my local community. As I move throughout my local community and discuss with many local residents the issue of climate change, many of them say to me, 'Look, I don't really understand how this affects me.' I try and explain to local residents why I think it is important, why I think it affects people in my community, me and my family. I have found some of the information provided on the climate change website very useful. There is a particular fact sheet that I often make available to local residents because it provides information that is very specific to my local community. I read from that document:

If the pre-industrial concentration of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere doubles over the coming decades, New South Wales could expect more flooding.

As someone whose electorate is divided down the middle by the Hawkesbury-Nepean River, flooding has always been a central concern. The document goes on to conclude:

For example, a 1-in-100 year flood would become a 1-in-44 year flood for the upper Parramatta River—

Well, that is not that far away from my electorate, but a 1-in-100 year flood would become:

a 1-in-35 year flood for the Hawkesbury-Nepean ...

That is of great significance to people in my local community. There are many homes located within the floodplain. The greater Penrith region has been settled since the first days of white settlement in this country, and there are many established properties, many homes, that have been located on flood prone land. Clearly the impacts of climate change and the increased likelihood of floods arising from the Nepean River will have an impact on families within my electorate.

I also want to make the point to people that our community in the greater Penrith region is one of the hotter parts of the Sydney metropolitan area. This was brought home very starkly several years ago when, as the Mayor of the City of Penrith, I led a campaign to put Penrith on the weather map. We succeeded in that campaign, but one of the by-products of that is that now, every night on the television news when Penrith appears, it is very clear that the temperature in Penrith is much greater than in most other parts of the Sydney basin. Clearly, as a hot and dry part of our hot and dry continent, we will be one of the regions that will feel the impacts of climate change very starkly. Of course, there is the Blue Mountains heritage area, and in my local community we face the threat of bushfires. The prospect of future bushfires will only increase as a result of climate change continuing to take hold.

There are many reasons why we need to tackle climate change, but one area I would like to focus on covers the important elements within this legislation that address the issue of household assistance—whether it be providing assistance to our pensioners, our seniors, our carers, people with disabilities, self-funded retirees or our low- and middle-income families, of whom there are many in my electorate. I am pleased to stand up on their behalf and to acknowledge that, whilst it is important for us to take these steps, we need

to make sure that those who are vulnerable are not left behind as we make the transition to a low-carbon future. In relation to fuel tax, there will be a 10 per cent reduction for the first three years of the scheme. As a community that is very car dependent, that is a protection that is of great significance to local residents in my community.

I could go on for much longer, but with time running short I would like to say that I think in framing this scheme the government has struck the right balance. It is a balance between taking the important and urgent action that is needed to tackle climate change and set our nation on a path to a low-carbon future while, on the other hand, ensuring that the impact on our economy, industry and jobs is minimised to the extent that it can be, so that the transition is less painful than it might otherwise be. I conclude by making the point that I started with: had this nation grappled with this issue seriously earlier, then we would have been set up to take advantage of the economic prosperity that I am sure our nation will face in the future, but instead we now find ourselves tackling these challenges at a time of great global economic challenge. I support the bills.