



Amanda Rishworth MP

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Speech to Federal Parliament

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National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Amendment Bill 2009

Ms Rishworth (Kingston) (6:37 PM) —I rise today to support the [National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Amendment Bill 2009](#). This bill strengthens the audit framework established by the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act and also clarifies the audit arrangements by making other administrative amendments. The passage of this bill is essential for Australia to be able to develop a third-party audit framework that is robust enough to support the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. We have heard a lot in the House today about the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme so I am going to add my contribution, especially on the importance of and the need for a carbon pollution reduction scheme. I think people on this side of the House at least do recognise that the need for a scheme like this is indisputable. The vast majority of scientists recognise that carbon pollution is causing the climate to change. We have seen 11 out of the past 12 years rank among the 12 warmest years since records began. The impact of climate change poses a threat to our economy, our environment and even our health.

As one of the hottest and driest continents on earth, Australia has a lot to lose from the impact of climate change. It has been proposed that anything more than an increase of 1.8 degrees Celsius could destroy the Great Barrier Reef—therefore not only destroying an amazing iconic site in Australia, one of the greatest wonders of the world and a unique environmental ecosystem, but also threatening the tourism industry and the businesses and jobs that go with it. We also know that it is predicted that climate change will see an increase in both the frequency and severity of drought. It has been suggested that the frequency of drought may increase up to 20 per cent over most of Australia by 2030. This poses a significant threat to our agricultural sector and to the country as a whole.

Of particular concern to me as a South Australian is the impact that less rainfall and greater evaporation will have on the Murray-Darling Basin, which has already been stressed by drought, over allocation and years of inaction. The system is simply not able to sustain further reduction in run-off as a result of climate change—thus threatening rural communities that rely heavily on the basin and the city of Adelaide, which also relies on the basin for its drinking water. We have seen in particular the refusal of the National Party to make any meaningful contribution to the

policy discussion on climate change. To this day we see the coalition deeply divided on the existence of climate change. I believe that this position of the National Party is an enormous betrayal of the party's core constituency. Rural Australia is going to be exposed to increased economic hardship caused by prolonged drought and possible fuel shortages to an even greater extent than city dwellers.

One particularly frightening possible result of a changed climate which is not often talked about is the effect on our health. I mentioned this just previously. One of the Australian contributors to the IPCC report is Dr Rosalie Woodruff, the author of *Climate change health impacts in Australia*. She has identified several threats to our health security. The first and most obvious is the likely increase in deaths from heatwaves. As, sadly, we saw last summer in Adelaide, the elderly are particularly vulnerable to the effects of severe heat. Currently over a thousand people die each year from the heat, mainly in nursing homes, but Dr Woodruff identifies that in a worse case scenario this figure could rise to 15,000 as temperatures rise and heatwaves last longer.

A changing climate will also change tropical disease vectors—that is, where mosquitoes that carry most tropical diseases are found. This means that if global temperatures increase then we can expect to see an increase in mosquito-borne illnesses like malaria, Ross River fever, and, according to Dr Woodruff, especially Dengue fever in urban Australia. So this is a particular threat. This is not something that is just a threat offshore; these diseases could potentially become a threat onshore. I know that the health and ageing committee will be looking further into this very important issue. The health impacts of climate change are significant and provide another compelling reason why we must take action on climate change.

For all these reasons, as a country and as a member of the global community, we must act now. That is why this government has sought to deal with climate change by introducing the CPRS legislation. That is why we need, as this bill suggests, to monitor our emissions, reduce them and begin to transfer to a low-carbon economy driven by renewable energy and green jobs. There is no uncertainty here—the science is clear. It is even clearer than it was in 2007, when those opposite, who were in government, refused to accept the facts and instead preferred to peddle myths. Those opposite continue to be divided on whether or not climate change is even occurring, despite the overwhelming scientific evidence. While the Leader of the Opposition plays political games with his response to this challenge, there remains a lack of certainty for business and the community at large. So if the opposition are serious about working in the national interest—about leaving things better than they found them and about making sure that Australia is sustainable and prosperous into the future—then they need to start getting serious about climate change.

Instead we have seen the opposition deny, deny, deny—until the eleventh hour, when they present a report but no policy. While the opposition call for amendments on the CPRS, they do not suggest any. I believe, along with many from this side of the House, that the events of the last few days have shown that the coalition are not serious about the challenge of climate change. The coalition need to start talking and to have a policy about mandatory renewable energy targets, just as the government has. The coalition need to start considering how to encourage green innovation, particularly in the automotive-manufacturing sector, as the government has with its

Green Car Innovation Fund. The coalition need to start supporting funds for the research and development of clean technologies.

The coalition also needs to take its head out of the sand and realise the global nature of this problem. Those opposite when in government refused to sign the Kyoto protocol and were part of the ignorance in the global community and not part of the solution. It is in this context that this government has begun to seriously address the climate crisis by introducing the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. While the opposition has been waiting and trying to see which way the wind blows, changing its position depending on the day or who the spokesperson is, the government has been getting things done.

I commend the Minister for Climate Change and Water for conducting a large range of consultations last year which did show the need for a strengthened audit framework to underpin accurate reporting as a part of an effective Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. In response to this need the minister has presented this bill before the House today. The key elements of this new framework are the clarification of terms, changes to access to audit results, procedures for the registration of auditors and improvements to the system of public disclosure of energy production data.

The revised terminology proposed by the bill directly links the name of the audit activity to the subject matter being audited, either a greenhouse or an energy audit. It also clarifies the status and role of auditors under the act by referring to them as 'registered greenhouse and energy auditors'. These seemingly simple changes also assist stakeholders understand the purpose of the audit framework being established which will ensure more effective participation. The government realises that there are a variety of sensitivities in relation to the compilation of information necessary to conduct a greenhouse or energy audit and so this bill includes provisions relating to both the publication of audit results and the secrecy of audit information.

The amendments to the act in this bill provide for the establishment of clear criteria for disclosure of audit results and give the Greenhouse and Energy Data Officer the discretion to make audit outcomes available to the public provided issues such as commercial sensitivity have been considered. Similarly, the bill ensures that the secrecy provisions of the act extend to information gathered whilst conducting audits and apply to all team members. This is common sense given that the auditors typically have access to highly confidential information and the protection of confidential information is important to ensure that businesses feel comfortable complying with the scheme.

The bill will also require potential auditors under the act to apply to the Greenhouse and Energy Data Officer for registration. Detailed requirements for auditor registration will be provided in subordinate legislation that will be determined after consultations that took place in May. The registration of auditors is a necessary requirement to ensure the integrity of the GEDO's accounting. This is reaffirmed by the bill's expansion of the scope of the legislative instrument determined under the act on the conduct and reporting requirements of audits and ensures that these requirements are more substantial than the current guidelines.

The final substantial change included in the provisions of this bill is to the public disclosure of energy production data. The bill removes the requirements for the

GEDO to disclose corporate level energy production data. The purpose of this amendment is to avoid confusion between economy-wide energy production and other energy production totals. This is because the collection of energy production data is a key element of an effective national climate strategy and an important complement to the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics' energy statistics.

An additional amendment to the act in the bill released by the Minister for Climate Change and Water and the Minister Assisting the Minister for Climate Change enables the voluntary transfer of reporting obligations to a facility specified under the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act from a controlling corporation, where only one member of its group has operational control of a facility, to a member of a different corporate group that has financial control of that facility.

I began at the outset of this speech by discussing the threat that climate change poses to Australia. It threatens our economic wellbeing, our environment, and it threatens our health and our future. The bill before us today provides for an effective, transparent and robust auditing system which will align with our proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. In combination we will be able to reduce emissions and contribute to the global effort of avoiding dangerous climate change. I commend the bill to the House.