



POLITICAL NOTES

Senator Mitch Fifield

Shadow Minister for Disabilities, Carers and the Voluntary Sector
Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate

APRIL 2011



GILLARD'S CARBON TAX LIE

It has been said and written many times before, but it still bears repeating: the Gillard Government formed office on the back of a lie. Julia Gillard put her hand on her heart and declared—and I quote: 'There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead.' No qualification, no equivocation, no hesitation, no subclauses. It was a pure, straight, simple statement. We have heard this falsehood repeated time and again. It has been canvassed in the media over and over again. In fact, it has been heard so often that the sheer audacity of the statement is almost starting to lose its impact.

That is why I think it is well worth spending a moment to consider that absolute, complete and utter falsehood again. This government slid into office on the back of a lie. But this is not the first time.

Cast your mind back to the 2007 election. You might remember that Labor was going to 'ease the squeeze'. Labor's greatest concern in that election campaign was for working families and the cost-of-living pressures that they faced. Labor was so keen to demonstrate how much they care that they came up with a couple of policies. One was GroceryWatch, which has now passed into infamy. The other was Fuelwatch, which has also faded into political history. The theory was that by watching something, such as the price of groceries or fuel, it would magically fall. The fact is, these policies were not grounded in reality, but in some sort of economic fantasy land where prices can be controlled by the power of Kevin Rudd's glare.

These policies were never going to achieve anything. It was all a con and a sham. The truth is that in 2007 Labor did not care about cost-of-living pressures. Labor never intended to do anything about cost-of-living pressures. They merely adopted a posture of care. They had a furrowed brow and a tilted head, but it meant nothing.

The reason I hark back to 2007 is to make evident Labor's track record when it comes to cost-of-living issues. They fib, they pose and they posture. In 2007, Labor's sins were sins of omission. Labor broke a promise—the promise to do something to help. They failed to do what they said they would do.

But in 2011, Labor's sins are ones of commission. They broke a promise not to do something. They promised that they would not introduce a carbon tax. Their broken promise is that they did something which they said they would not do.

Make no mistake, the carbon tax will increase the cost of living for Australian families. It will push up electricity bills by an extra \$300 per year in the first year of operation. Petrol is to rise by 6.5c a litre, again in just the first year of operation of the carbon tax. Gas prices will rise by 10 per cent in the first year as well, and grocery prices will inevitably increase. The price of manufactured goods will rise as well because the cost of producing everything and anything will increase.

The response of the Labor Party to our concerns about the carbon tax is entirely predictable. We are 'climate change deniers', or we are 'backwards red-necks'. The truth is, we acknowledge that man does make a contribution to global warming. But we have a very practical policy to address this. A policy that doesn't amount to a tax on everything.

We are going to set up a \$10.5 billion fund to buy back greenhouse emissions to meet the reduction target that both the Labor and Liberal Parties have signed on to; that is reducing emissions by five per cent by 2020. Our fund will provide incentives to cut emissions through things such as capturing carbon in soil, planting trees, cleaning up coal-fired power stations, cleaning up gases from coalmines and making buildings more energy-efficient. We have a plan, not a tax.

The debate here is about good policy versus bad policy. It is about what constitutes an appropriate response, an effective response, and a response that will not increase the cost of living for Australian families.

A few weeks ago I attended a rally in front of Prime Minister Gillard's electorate office. There were about 400 people there, including my colleagues Senator Scott Ryan, Bernie Finn MLC and Andrew Elsbury MLC. They were rightly angry at the breach of promise by this Prime Minister, they were rightly concerned about increasing cost of living pressures. These were 400 real, regular, everyday Australians who turned up to Julia Gillard's electorate office to make their views heard, and they deserve to be listened to. Their anger is justified. Their anger is righteous. This government stands condemned for their lies and their plan to slug Australians with a tax on everything that will achieve nothing.

Senator Mitch Fifield
Senator for Victoria
42 Florence St Mentone VIC 3194
Ph: 03 9584 2455 Email: senator.fifield@aph.gov.au