



Speech by

**Mike Horan**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH**

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## **VOLUNTARY CARBON CREDIT TRADING BILL**

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (8.26 pm): I want to speak to this bill because I believe, as do all the other members of the opposition, that the Leader of the Liberal Party has put a lot of thought into it. At the moment, a question that I think perplexes the minds of many is the issue of climate change. Very many eminent people, such as atmospheric physicists, speak about it from both sides and they speak with equal passion. I think all of us feel that if it is right that there is climate change, then we should be doing something about it.

I just hope that in 100 years time we do not look back and say what a great hoax it all was, like the millennium bug or a few other things that have happened. In terms of the age of the world and the fluctuations that have happened, at the point of time we are in now we are but a pimple on a pumpkin. The world has been through times of great warmth and vegetation growth. It has gone into an ice age. It has gone from that ice age back into something else.

I see the member for Mundingburra is in the chamber. The coral collection in the Townsville Museum contains coral from Cornwall. So Cornwall was once a far warmer place than it is today. There have been huge atmospheric changes in this world and that has happened over literally thousands, if not millions, of years.

The Kyoto agreement refers to the intersection of two lines on a graph. One line of the graph shows the ability of the world to absorb carbon and the other line shows the emission of carbon. Those lines crossed in about 1991. Theoretically, that means that after that time the carbon being emitted into the world was not able to be absorbed fully. Therefore, the theory goes that this extra carbon is causing climate change. There are other people—eminent scientists—who say quite vehemently that carbon dioxide has no relevance whatsoever.

Professor Fred Singer is an atmospheric physicist and research fellow at an independent institute. He is an Emeritus Professor of Environmental Science at the University of Virginia and a former founding director of the US National Weather Satellite Service. Professor Singer has produced a commentary on a TV show called *The Great Global Warming Swindle*. He supports that particular TV show. He says that Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* has certainly met its match. That indicates the two sides of the argument.

Australia produces 1.4 per cent of the world's CO<sub>2</sub> or carbon. We are a very small emitter of carbon. Unlike many other countries that signed up to the Kyoto agreement, the day-to-day running of our economy—and nowhere in Australia is this more so than in Queensland—depends very strongly on the mining of resources, particularly coal. Recently, the delivery of the state budget outlined the importance of coalmining and energy resource production to the state of Queensland. Therefore, it behoves us to always tread very carefully in these matters, whilst at the same time being responsible. That is what the Leader of the Liberal Party and member for Moggill has endeavoured to bring together a carbon trading system that is voluntary, but which is also a step forward as we start to have a greater understanding of the changes that are happening around us.

When we look at a system that involves carbon credits and so on, those who are involved in the real world say, 'Well, you can't sell nothing.' Perhaps the only time that someone sold nothing was when Weis' Picnic Point Restaurant sold tins of fresh Toowoomba air. It was very popular with the tourists in the 1960s and 1970s. However, generally it is hard to sell fresh air. The closest thing to that would probably be selling fairy floss at the show.

We all understand that if you want to sell something, you have to be able to pick it up, eat it, feel it or use it. Therefore, while a radical system that involves carbon credits may be good for mankind, there needs to be something of value to someone at the other end of the equation. At the same time, there needs to be sustainability, certainty and integrity in the system. It would be very easy for people to say, 'We're putting together some sort of exchange and we'll sell your trees for you', but people will only buy them if they get something out of it.

The minister has mentioned some private schemes that have started, such as the one adopted by Virgin Airlines, but it is just trying to sell more seats on its planes. That is the quid pro quo for it. Origin Energy is trying to build up the PR image of the company. There has to be something in it for them if they are going to spend money, because no-one gives away money for nothing.

That is why I think that the Leader of the Liberal Party has thought this out carefully and has made it voluntary, so that it is Queensland friendly. It is can gradually progress and develop with certainty and the strong underpinning of the Queensland government because of his suggestion that the exchange be managed by the Queensland Investment Corporation. It has a real solidity to it and it is something that will not fold and collapse as so many other things have.

One of the most important things in the system of carbon credits is certification. The member for Capalaba said that it was a good idea to grow a few trees. However, one cannot sell the carbon credits that are locked up in trees unless there is a huge chunk of them. If people want to grow trees, they will have to put together something like 1,000 hectares or 10,000 hectares. People will not buy five or 10 trees. That is not how the carbon credit system will work. It has to involve big chunks. It would probably work well if, for example, Mitsubishi Electric from Japan wanted to offset the emissions of its power stations and had to buy big forestry plantations or pay for the establishment of big forestry plantations through something like this, which would have the strength of the Queensland government as its underpinning exchange agent.

Recently, I was in Hong Kong. I tried to count the number of units there, but I gave up at about 10 million. On every unit there are two or three air conditioning units. I heard recently that India has a growing middle class and is starting to see the emergence of little airline services such as Jetstar, Ryan Air and so on which are buying 50 jets at a time. When we see the massive expansion that is occurring in some of our neighbours to the north, we realise the importance of setting some sort of an example.

Our little 1.4 per cent of emissions might be very tiny, but we propose a voluntary system and that we start to prepare ourselves. As the years go by, people will probably have a greater understanding of whether or not this is global warming. Maybe it is simply that the earth's axis is tilting, as it has tilted over thousands and millions of years, on an elliptical basis. It gets a little further away from the sun and then comes closer to the sun and every so many thousands of years there are changes in the Northern Hemisphere in particular—who knows.

If we are facing change, we should be prepared for it. This system is well balanced, careful and voluntary. It looks at a number of different options and it can only do good for our environment. I think it is well worth considering. It is a careful approach. When there is such doubt and so many widely disparaging views from eminent people, we need a very careful approach.