



Speech by

## Rosemary Menkens

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Hansard Wednesday, 6 June 2007

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### VOLUNTARY CARBON CREDIT TRADING BILL

**Mrs MENKENS** (Burdekin—NPA) (8.06 pm): I am very happy to contribute to tonight's debate and offer my support to the Leader of the Liberal Party's private member's bill. The Voluntary Carbon Credit Trading Bill seeks to create the Carbon Credit Trading Exchange as a positive move for Queensland towards combating greenhouse gas emissions. This exchange would operate as a company under the GOC Act and the Queensland Investment Corporation would have a majority of board members.

The environmental problems facing Queensland range from local all the way to global. While this means that there will be a much broader range of government power to challenge local problems, this does not mean that we can do our share to attempt to combat and to create ways to adapt to global problems—problems such as climate change. A necessary prerequisite is to ensure that environmental science is operating on local and regional scales. An obstacle to environmental science is that it requires an efficient environmental team. This will be essential in the implementation of this legislation.

Carbon trading is a way of assigning a monetary value to the earth's shared atmosphere and where carbon emissions occur a monetary cost is assigned to the industry or country that created it. To counterbalance this, where effort is made to diminish carbon emissions, such as producing renewable energy forms like ethanol or growing forests called carbon sinks, a credit is created.

Now the three areas that the Carbon Credit Trading Corporation would address and would provide voluntary certification to corporations and enterprises to reduce carbon emissions are in sequestrations, such as forestry or geosequestration, power produced from renewable sources, such as biofuels, solar power and the like. Credits would be available for current industries that are able to demonstrate a relative reduction in their emission levels.

A large percentage of the community accept that human caused emissions of greenhouse gases may result in changes to climate systems. The observed global temperature trend in the past 25 years has been an increase of 0.15 degrees celsius between 1976 and 1998. Although many natural factors effect the earth's climate, a majority, or certainly a very large number, of the world's scientists are confident that greenhouse gas increases were the main factor contributing to global warming over the last 50 years.

Climate models driven by scenarios of greenhouse emissions indicate that over the next century a global warming of even one to two degrees Celsius could occur. History has shown that a warming of even one to two degrees Celsius can have dramatic consequences and there will be a need for us to learn to adapt to these changes. The public reality is that there exists a widespread belief within the community that dangerous global warming is occurring and that it has been caused by humans. There is a great deal of alarm developing within the community, but I must say that this is being fuelled by often sensational media reporting and lobby groups. There are other scientists who still hold a high degree of scepticism about some of the scientific findings that are being lauded as factual. One of these is Professor Robert Clarke from James Cook University who has some very strong theories that question some of the currently accepted findings, and I will quote from some of those.

The reality is that climate is a very complex and a very dynamic natural system that nobody yet really understands, though scientists do understand some parts. Arguments put forward by some scientists

are based on the fact that the computer models that predict future climate make assumptions according to the data that is programmed into them. There is a natural range of warmings and coolings. It is also fair to say that analysis of the past 100 years is a very small sample compared with data that goes back over 50,000 years. The Antarctic ice core data shows that enormous changes in temperature precede changes in carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere by many hundreds and thousands of years. Between the eras of 50,000 BC and 9,000 BC there were enormous climatic changes of up to 15 degree Celsius above the mean temperature and up to eight degrees Celsius below the mean. To put significance to these figures, the Aborigines have been in Australia for 60,000 years. In other words, they were here in Australia during that time.

Some scientists argue that, as judged against the ice core figures such as these and other geological records, the late 20th century warming is not unusual in rate or magnitude. There is a vast difference between scientifically proven facts and opinion, but there is a generalised presumption that human activity is contributing towards global warming. Members will notice that most of the warnings are preceded by such words as 'may happen', 'could occur' et cetera. I am not a scientist and I certainly am not about to convince people as to who is correct. However, it is very important to listen and to judge with an open mind to glean the real facts—the real facts—and not be influenced by some of the alarmist theories that promote opinion and not factual evidence.

With the access to unrestricted web sites that do not have regulatory codes of legal libel restraint, much erroneous information on many subjects can be peddled to the public. However, the majority of scientific findings on the greenhouse effect certainly show that with increasing populations and industrialisation across the world human activity is creating increased carbon emissions. So what can we do to counteract the effects our increasing population and industrialisation are having on Australia? What should we do as a government and as individuals to make a difference? These are some of the greatest decisions that will face governments and the community throughout this century.

Burning fossil fuels such as coal and oil creates much of the carbon gas emissions into the atmosphere. Some 80 per cent of Australia's power is produced by burning coal and of course our cars and planes are powered with petrol and diesel. A program of identification and reduction of greenhouse gas and air pollutant emissions across the state needs to be implemented. Opportunities and technologies for reducing air pollutants must be identified and implemented. Governments must work with business and industry to protect jobs and investment. Queensland has to look at initiatives to provide opportunities for industries to access carbon credit offsets through forest plantations and other initiatives. Incentives need to be introduced for business and industry to undertake energy efficiency audits and implement resulting actions that have reasonable payback periods. Incentives should be introduced for the construction of energy efficient businesses and industrial premises. The establishment of a carbon credit trading exchange consistent with the Queensland coalition's private member's bill is an important plank in this.

It is important to note that the voluntary nature of this carbon credit trading scheme is a positive given that the credits issued would be tradable. It will be important to denote a potentially significant value for these credits, which will create an incentive for companies to participate in the scheme and reduce emissions. The value of the credits must be significant and substantial if this is to work and if it is to influence industry behaviour. The idea is to reward industries that use technological innovation and other means to cut their emissions substantially more than their competitors and to assist and improve the economics of alternative energy sources and of sequestration. This potentially opens the door for these environmentally sustainable ways of dealing with greenhouse gasses to become a major growth industry for this state.

This bill is a benchmark in this area and it reflects sentiments recently launched by the federal government. This legislation would complement and enhance the clean coal technology bill that is currently before the House. It is disappointing to see the government simply voting against this bill because of its political inclination. I note that many of the arguments from members on the other side of the House are being carefully massaged so as not to be seen to be supportive. Where are the clean, green credentials that their party espouses? They do not seem to be in evidence tonight. I commend this bill to the House.