



## **Carbon Pricing**

### **Chamber of the House of Representatives**

**31 May 2011**

**Sharon Grierson MP**

Ms GRIERSON (Newcastle) (22:04): I rise to correct the latest attempt by the Liberal Party to mislead the public, and the constituents of my electorate of Newcastle, on the impact of a carbon price. Over the past few months, the Australian public has been subjected to a tirade of false and misleading claims by Mr Abbott over the impact of a carbon price. Now it seems Abbott's mindless negativity has infected the ranks of the newly elected New South Wales Liberal government.

Yesterday afternoon, the newly elected state member for Newcastle, Tim Owen, made a number of exaggerated and deceptive claims about the impact of a price on carbon in the Hunter region.

It is not usually my habit to respond to every untruth peddled by the coalition in this important debate, but this latest attempt at fear-mongering cannot go unchallenged.

Quoting Premier O'Farrell, Mr Owen repeated four times the fallacious claim that up to 13,000 people in the Hunter would lose their jobs if a price on carbon were introduced. Besides being misleading, this claim is at best alarming and at worst insulting to the intelligence of the people of Newcastle.

To make this claim, Mr Owen relied on a discredited and outdated piece of research by the Liberal Party's favoured consultants, Frontier Economics—the same research relied upon, I note, several times by the member for Paterson in this House.

The costings and assumptions underlying that particular piece of research have long been disputed. For example, the report assumes a carbon price of around \$46 per tonne, well above what anyone anticipates will be the price on carbon set here.

But nowhere does the report assert that existing jobs in the Hunter will be lost if such a price on carbon is introduced. What the report does say is that jobs growth will continue in the Hunter, even modelled on the highly exaggerated carbon price of \$46 per tonne.

Yet Mr Owen repeated four times the false claim that jobs will be lost. In doing so, he used his privilege as an MP to make exaggerated claims based on a report with questionable credentials, to try to panic his constituents into believing 13,000 people in our region will soon be out of work.

I simply say to Mr Owen: that is not leadership; it is just fear-mongering, plain and simple. This is not what the people of Newcastle expect when they entrust an individual to represent and speak for their interests in the parliaments of this nation.

That the New South Wales Liberals have turned to the divisive tactics of Mr Abbott—described recently, I note, by John Hewson, a former Leader of the Liberal Party, as 'the master of the negative'—may not surprise everyone, but it will certainly disappoint many.

The facts in this debate are simple. Climate change is real. The evidence is overwhelming. We are already seeing the impacts of a changing climate. Human activities are triggering the changes we are witnessing in the global climate.

As the Newcastle Herald noted today, the International Energy Agency has found that last year greenhouse gas emissions increased by a record amount and that an estimated 30.6 gigatonnes of carbon were released worldwide. The IEA advised that to avoid the worst effects of global warming we must stop short of 32 gigatonnes a year by 2020.

As the Herald noted, even this target is 'starting to seem impossibly optimistic'. Rather than supporting a scare campaign over a carbon price based on questionable modelling, perhaps Mr Owen should focus his attention on assisting the more immediate concerns of his constituents—for example, the New South Wales Liberal government's decision to tear up its contracts with 120,000 households under the Solar Bonus Scheme, households acting on climate change.

But, putting this episode aside, I restate my willingness to work with Mr Owen on areas of common concern to the people we both represent. Newcastle has a number of pressing needs that would benefit from our cooperation, in particular infrastructure priorities and encouraging the early rollout of the National Broadband Network.

True leadership involves recognising when to put petty politicking aside for the sake of the public good rather than perpetuating the mindless, incessant and negative fear-mongering that has become the hallmark of the federal opposition.