



CLIMATE CHANGE & GREENHOUSE EMISSIONS REDUCTION BILL
7 March 2007

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I read the speech of the Premier—who is now the country's first self-ordained and proclaimed minister for sustainability and climate change—on climate change and greenhouse reduction. It was full of self-congratulatory claptrap and expensive tax-paid gimmicks. I thought, 'What an opportunity lost.' In it, the Premier sets out his case for the bill and states that 'the imperative for action is becoming clearer and more urgent by the day'—a statement with which most of us agree. He mentions big names and endorsements to help his credibility—namely, Mikhail Gorbachev, Tony Blair, Vice President Gore, David Suzuki, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sir Nicholas Stern, Morris Iemma, and John Thwaites—and even the Queen's Speech at the recent opening of the United Kingdom parliament gets a mention.

In summing up, he states that the bill seeks to bring about practical change for the better to maintain South Australia's national and international leadership in relation to climate change and to secure the long-term prosperity of our state. The empty rhetoric that accompanied his grand words was embarrassing—I suspect not only to me but also to anyone with a knowledge of the issues facing the world and our role in them. I really believe that we as a small state have an opportunity to provide national and international leadership that could make a significant difference to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

However, while we happily play on the world stage by selling our uranium, we are not taking responsibility for our actions. As a mother, I know, as all parents do, that every right carries with it responsibility and that every action has a reaction. We teach our children that there is a price to pay, a cost for the benefits we enjoy. We must go to school, and we must work in jobs and earn money for the things we want for us and our families so that we can enjoy the good things in life. We know that we must pay taxes to our governments if we are to have the health and education services we want.

I believe that our good fortune in having uranium in the ground that is wanted by much of the rest of the world so that they can catch up and enjoy the lifestyle we already enjoy is a responsibility and has a cost for which we must pay the price, as we will enjoy the benefits from the money they pay for it. It is my view that this state should take back the radioactive waste that is produced when our uranium is processed.

We have a stable political system, which the Premier so happily espoused today as one of the reasons we are near the top in the world for mineralisation, exploration and development. This is just another reason that we must take responsibility. There are many other countries which do not have the benefit of our wonderful democracy and whose governments are at the whim of some very unpleasant dictators. If they got their hands on plutonium produced from uranium from South Australia, blew up people and damaged our environment, I would feel at least in part responsible. I ask you, Madam Deputy Speaker: wouldn't you? The twin towers disaster would look minimal in comparison with the carnage that would be caused.

We also have some of the best, most stable geological formations where the waste can be stored. The Maralinga area—where some of the atomic bomb testing was done years ago—is accessed from my electorate of Flinders, and I understand that could be one such place. It has an area that is close both to the contaminated areas and to the railway that links the north and south as well as the east and west of Australia, and that could bring in waste from all over the world, if necessary, via ports around the country. It is sparsely populated and has coastal areas where a direct port could be established if required. It is not as if we would not be well compensated by companies that would like to pay someone to take the waste.

The Premier, washing his hands (like Pontius Pilate) of the responsibility for uranium once it has left our shores, saying it is

not a problem, does not recognise that we live in an increasingly global world—as he pointed out in his speech—and this cannot be accepted by any decent-thinking people.

Last but not least, we could, in this bill, undertake to do some serious research into thorium nuclear technology. This could be the solution to the uranium conundrum, and we are also blessed with having some of the largest deposits of thorium in the world. For some excellent information regarding thorium I recommend the article 'New Age Nuclear' by Tim Dean in the April 2006 issue (issue No. 8) of *Cosmos* magazine. My views can be found in my speech to parliament of 3 May 2006, which is under 'Speeches' on my website at www.lizpenfold.com.

The Premier could undertake to put a trial thorium reactor at Maralinga, which would have the potential of using the uranium waste that accumulates there and reducing its life to a fraction of what it is at present while also providing cheap power for the Australian power grid. Iluka, Challenger and Zinifex are among those companies that currently need power in the region. There will be a massive need for power with the nearby Gawler Craton mineralisation being developed, as well as a need for the water that could be produced by the proposed desalination plants. A thorium reactor has the huge advantage of not producing plutonium but of burning it up, and it is impossible for thorium reactors to either blow up or melt down. If we really are to live in a sustainable environment on this planet, and take responsibility for ourselves and the footprint we leave on this earth, then now is our opportunity to do so.

In his speech the Premier talks about retrofitting expensive solar panels on government buildings, 250 schools, and the Adelaide Airport. These already have power, and this would only cause ongoing depreciation and maintenance costs. The millions spent on these gimmicks could have been put into providing real power to some of the state's regional communities that really need it. The Premier boasts about South Australia being home to about 51 per cent of Australia's installed wind power capacity; I would like to know where he was when I started with the first of the wind generation proposals during the time of our Liberal government. I received very little support from either side of the parliament, and when Babcock and Brown wanted to do their first community presentation they could not get a politician to come and speak. Much to my great pride I was called upon, and made the first speech (I believe) by a politician in the state of South Australia on this subject.

The Premier speaks of these gimmicks, and of the doubling of uranium mining at Roxby Downs and the benefits that will bring, as if it was of his own making, when he could instead be doing great things, things that have world significance, things that would really help reduce our dependence upon coal and greenhouse gases and make the world not only a cleaner but also a much safer place. Such as it is, I support the bill.