

Federal, NSW Govts clash on climate

By Don Pagé

A NSW minister has attacked his right-wing colleagues in the Federal Government as “out of touch” on energy and climate policy, predicting that the State Government would go its own way on the issue.

The NSW Energy Minister Don Harwin has promoted emissions-reduction as a prime goal, not just reliability of power supply, which is a populist cost issue as elections loom for both Governments next year.

He wanted science put before ideology, and called on his Federal colleagues to end the “climate wars”. He promised that the NSW Government would be taking independent action -- after the National Energy Guarantee (NEG) was ditched, in a right-wing coup which toppled former Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull months ago.

Both emissions and reliability of supply were part of the NEG, which was opposed by the Coalition’s hard-Right, including local MP Craig Kelly (Liberal, Hughes), who is a prominent denier of man-made climate change.

The NSW Energy Minister said he would push for rules to force power companies to reduce carbon emissions, at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting of energy ministers in Adelaide this week, a move which he labelled a “circuit-breaker”.

“We’re putting emissions reduction back on the table where it should be,” Mr Harwin said.

He believed that Mr [Morrison's abandonment of carbon emission targets and the National Energy Guarantee](#) (NEG) had inflated power prices.

“The Federal Government is out of touch on energy and climate policy ... It's time for them to change course,” Mr Harwin said.

‘FLOUNDERING AND BACKFLIPPING’

The NSW Energy Minister urged the Morrison Government to “come to grips” with climate and energy policy.

He noted the State Government was happy with former prime minister [Malcolm Turnbull's plan to implement the NEG](#), before it became political poison.

“NSW wants a sensible emissions policy to be embedded in the national electricity law, outside the high drama of the ‘Canberra bubble’.”

Federal Energy Minister Angus Taylor brushed aside the criticisms from his New South Wales Liberal counterpart. “It is important in making sure we keep reliability in our electricity market.”

The response was more strident from Federal Resources Minister Matt Canavan, who is also attending the COAG meeting.

“I’m not focused on what will happen in 2050, I’m focused on what will happen here and now,” the Queensland senator said. “I certainly don’t intend being in Parliament in 2050.”

Victorian Labor Energy Minister Lily D’Ambrosio said the Federal Government had failed to show leadership on energy policy.

“We’ve only seen floundering and backflipping ,and no direction whatsoever from the national Government. Today will be no different,” she said of the conference.

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