

Local MP in electric-car row

Local Liberal MP Craig Kelly is opposing tax-support for electric cars, but has denied rumours of a backbench revolt on the issue. Other MPs see an emerging opportunity for local industry in a world market being stifled.

MP Kelly has opposed any subsidies to make electric cars more competitive, arguing "you'll have the rich person in Balmain buying a Tesla, subsidised by the bloke in Penrith who's driving a Corolla". But his analogy has been dismissed as outdated.

An anonymous backbencher claimed that most Liberals knew that there was a global shift to electric vehicles and that Australia would follow suit.

"The only question is: do we want a piece of the action, or should we instead have a heated ideological fight over it, and then import everything?" he asked.

The conservative Hughes MP is chair of the Coalition's energy and environment committee, and warned that electric cars have a bigger carbon footprint than conventional ones -- a view that was rejected by the creator of the website upon which the assertion was based.

Mr Kelly told *The Australian* last week that electric vehicles relied on coal-fired electricity to run, and created more carbon-dioxide pollution than petrol vehicles. That claim has been rejected as outdated, and based on the government's online [Green Vehicle Guide](#), which allows comparisons among models.

A former government official Tristan Edis, who led the development of the guide, said the website used 2015 data that did not reflect the current level of renewables in the electricity mix, and so inflated the emissions produced.

OLD DATA BLAMED FOR ERROR

Mr Edis said the guide should use updated emissions data or projections -- showing that some electric vehicles produced fewer emissions than a Toyota Corolla, and that the discrepancy widened over time.

"[Mr] Kelly is misunderstanding the nature of the tool and ... is coming to the wrong conclusion as a consequence," Mr Edis said.

Environment and Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg kickstarted debate on electric vehicles [in an interview and opinion piece for Fairfax Media](#) recently, saying that the right planning would allow Australian consumers to benefit from the transport "revolution".

Advocates argue that financial incentives should form part of government aid to the industry, however Mr Frydenberg told Sky News that "we are not proposing new subsidies".

Mr Kelly was reportedly backed by Nationals Andrew Broad and John Williams, and would raise the issue of government assistance in the party room when Parliament resumes.

PARTY BRAWL DENIED

However the local MP rejected suggestions of an internal brawl, to Fairfax Media.

"I've got no beef against electric cars ... You want a level playing field towards the technologies, then let them go hell-for-leather competing against each other," he said.

Senator Williams had a bet each way -- opposing subsidies, but backing an electric-car industry in Australia.

Mr Kelly said other factors, such as emissions from manufacturing, also increased the carbon footprint of electric cars. The Electric Vehicle Council said that carbon savings from using electric cars could offset manufacturing emissions in about three years.

Carbon fibre could be encouraged as part of the new car technology, according to the Liberal MP for Corangamite, Sarah Henderson. Her electorate includes Geelong where Ford vehicles were once manufactured, and where a carbon-fibre industry is developing.

Based on an article by Nicole Hasham and Mark Kenny, 29 January 2018

<http://www.theleader.com.au/story/5196989/government-mps-ridicule-claims-of-looming-backbench-revolt-over-electric-cars/?cs=8>