



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**  
**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Renewable Energy**

**QUESTION**

**Tuesday, 30 September 2014**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## QUESTION

**Date** Tuesday, 30 September 2014  
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**Questioner** Lambie, Sen Jacqui  
**Speaker**

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**Responder** Abetz, Sen Eric  
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### Renewable Energy

Renewable Energy

**Senator LAMBIE** (Tasmania—Deputy Leader and Deputy Whip of the Palmer United Party in the Senate) (14:37): My question is to the Leader of the Government in the Senate and the Senator for Tasmania, Senator Abetz. Does the minister agree that the national RET scheme was designed to limit the harm that Australia's coal fired power generators cause to our environment by providing more renewable energy generators, which emit less harmful greenhouse gases?

**Senator ABETZ** (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:38): I do recall a former senator from our home state of Tasmania who in fact denigrated renewable energy in the form of hydropower and believed that the answer for Tasmania was a coal fired power station in the Fingal Valley. And of course that former senator was none other than the leader of the Australian Greens, Senator Bob Brown, in this place. That is how things change from time to time. I can indicate to the senator that I think we all would like to see renewable energy, and our home state of Tasmania boasts hydro, in a manner that has been criticised for decades by the Australian Greens. What we want to see is good, clean, renewable energy, but we also want to see is affordable energy. And one thing we do not want to see in Australia is manufacturing being exported out of Australia to other countries where they do not have the strong, robust environmental regimes as exist in Australia.

We already saw the outcome of the disastrous carbon tax, which, thanks to Palmer United, we were able to finally get rid of, along with colleagues from the Liberal Democrats, Family First, the motoring enthusiasts, Senator Xenophon and the DLP. But, having said all that, we as a government are looking at the report of the review into the Renewable Energy Target, and we will come out with our proposals in due course.

**Senator LAMBIE** (Tasmania—Deputy Leader and Deputy Whip of the Palmer United Party in the Senate) (14:39): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Does the minister agree that Tasmania's hydro energy is one of the best sources of clean renewable energy, emits no harmful greenhouse gases and generates more than 90 per cent of our state's power?

**Senator ABETZ** (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:40): The Hydro-Electric Commission in our home state of Tasmania is the reason I am in this place, because, but for the employment opportunity that was provided to my father and family in 1961, we would not have emigrated from the other side of the globe to Tasmania to take up a great opportunity, so I think you will find no more sympathetic a person in this place to the Hydro-Electric Commission and the development of hydro-industrialisation than myself. Having said that, I believe that hydro has had a great history in Tasmania and will have a great future in Tasmania. That is what we as a coalition government in Canberra and a Liberal government in Hobart are absolutely committed to protecting.

**Senator LAMBIE** (Tasmania—Deputy Leader and Deputy Whip of the Palmer United Party in the Senate) (14:41): Mr President, I ask a father supplementary question. Given that the minister agreed that (1) the national RET scheme was designed to limit the environmental harm coal fired power stations caused and (2) Tasmania uses hydro renewable energy and has no dirty coal fired power stations, can the minister explain why he supported a national RET system that effectively forces every Tasmanian business and household to pay an extra tax of tens of millions of dollars a year in order to replace mainland coal fired generators with renewable power generation?

**Senator ABETZ** (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:41): As I understood the situation, because we have not had further hydro-industrialisation in Tasmania, courtesy of the Greens, we need Basslink to import brown

coal energy from Victoria into Tasmania, and that is another environmental debacle, courtesy of the Australian Greens, that does not get the sort of publicity it deserves. Having said that, we also use Basslink the other way, to export hydropower to the mainland and, as a result, get some benefits for our home state of Tasmania. But let us never forget that the carbon tax windfall, so called, for the hydro was in fact paid for by Australian taxpayers and Tasmanian taxpayers, and we are concerned to reduce the cost of living for our fellow Australians and to ensure that businesses remain viable. (*Time expired*)