



Australian Senate

Christine Milne

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media release

Australia's last Fossil Fools' Day? Let's end coal subsidies on Budget Day

Hobart, Tuesday 1 April 2008 Australian Greens climate change spokesperson, Senator Christine Milne, today called on the Rudd Government to make today Australia's last 'Fossil Fools' Day' by committing to ending the billions of dollars in subsidies to coal and oil in the upcoming Budget.

Senator Milne said "If Prime Minister Rudd and his Government are serious about climate change, they must take the opportunity of their first Budget to phase out the massive taxpayer subsidies that currently pay polluters to keep polluting, and start transferring them to the clean, sunrise industries that are actually deserving of support.

"They must stop the Jekyll and Hyde attitude which sees the Prime Minister saying he wants to be a leader on climate change while Martin Ferguson is fast-tracking funding to turn coal into a horrendously dirty transport fuel. We must see a truly whole-of-government approach that takes climate change into consideration with each budgetary decision.

"The coal and oil sector is old, polluting and well entrenched. Even if climate change were not an issue, it would be outrageous that our governments add some \$9 billion every year to the coffers of the rich multinational corporations that run the sector.

"When you add climate change and peak oil considerations to the mix, ongoing fossil fuel subsidies become one of the most perverse and destructive government decisions imaginable.

"With the Rudd Government searching for budgetary savings to take the pressure off interest rates, surely subsidies to rich and polluting corporations should be the very first place to start, rather than further undermining scientific research by cutting the CSIRO's budget.

"The Greens have proposed that a portion of the billions that would be saved by cutting fossil fuel subsidies should be channelled towards further research, development and commercialisation of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies through a *Sun Fund*, and to pay for the early stages of a systematic and systemic retrofit of Australia's housing stock for energy efficiency, which would largely be paid through earnings from auctioning emissions trading permits.

"Today's 'Fossil Fools' Day' would be an ideal occasion for Mr Rudd or Minister Wong to announce that this vital process will be begun in the upcoming Budget."

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