



FAMILY FIRST



Steve Fielding **Family First** Senator for Victoria

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CLIMATE CHANGE IS A SOCIAL ISSUE, NOT JUST AN ECONOMIC ISSUE

Focusing on climate change as just an economic or an environmental issue forgets that what we really should be aiming for is a better and more sustainable way of life for Australian families.

"We all know we have to do a lot more to ensure climate change does not threaten family life in the long term," Family First leader Steve Fielding said today. "But the danger in seeing climate change as just an economic issue is that we push up petrol and power bills to such a level that we crush hundreds of thousands of families in the short term.

"Families are already struggling to make ends meet with skyrocketing petrol and grocery prices. The threat of even higher petrol and power bills under an emissions trading scheme could be devastating and push many families over the edge.

"Family First wants any emissions trading scheme to include assistance for families, especially vulnerable families.

"Family First calls on the Government to provide genuine relief to families by using revenue from the sale of permits to offer innovative financial assistance packages to help families reduce their energy costs, such as subsidies and low-interest loans to buy energy efficient products or insulate their house."

Climate change minister Penny Wong gave a speech today where she said "let me be absolutely clear: this Government believes climate change is an economic issue, and the only way to tackle climate change is with real economic reform."

"The Government should be careful to remember that it may construct a great emissions trading system, but without careful planning that market system might trample all over families," Senator Fielding said. "The Government should be looking to use the carrot rather than the stick.

"Being green does not mean you have to ignore the petrol pain of the average family. It does mean you have to look to the future with better public transport, improved emissions standards for cars, lower taxes for efficient vehicles and alternative fuels.

"If the Government was serious about helping families and addressing climate change it would also:

- Commit to a billion dollar investment in public transport, to provide families in the outer suburbs and regional areas with a practical alternative to driving their cars;
- Cut petrol tax as it delivers three times the saving, as a proportion of income, to the lowest income earners compared to the highest income earners;
- Implement Family First's national Drink Container Recycling scheme to reduce litter and teach all of us that trash is cash.

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