



Minor parties press for action now

Up to 12 Liberal senators would support the legislation

CHRISTIAN KERR

THE minor parties are pushing the Liberals closer to a vote on the emissions trading scheme within days, with up to 12 Liberal senators

prepared to support the legislation if they are given a free vote as demanded by Joe Hockey.

The opposition's lead negotiator on the ETS Ian Macfarlane confirmed last night that up to 12 Liberals could back the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme in the Senate no matter the outcome of this morning's leadership vote.

Liberal Senate leaders were locked in negotiations with Family

First senator Steve Fielding last night in a desperate effort to defer a vote on the CPRS bills until parliament returns in February.

Greens sources indicated late yesterday their party would not vote to defer the debate or move the guillotine, which would bring on a final vote.

A spokeswoman for government Senate Leader Chris Evans last night refused to nominate

when the government might seek to end debate.

"We want to get this bill passed," he said.

Senator Fielding stunned observers earlier yesterday with a suite of demands in exchange for support to delay a vote.

The Victorian called for a royal commission co-chaired by Ross Garnaut and prominent climate sceptic Ian Plimer to investigate

the science behind climate change and the effectiveness of emission reduction schemes in reducing emissions, and a Productivity Commission inquiry into the economic impact on Australia of introducing an ETS before the rest of the world.

"Some people may laugh, but we need to get this right," he said.

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Broken pledge on building watchdog

By **BEN SCHNEIDERS**
WORKPLACE REPORTER

LABOR has failed to fulfil its election promise to abolish the controversial building industry watchdog by early 2010, with the Rudd Government yesterday conceding that the Senate will not deal with the issue this year.

Construction unions attacked the failure and blamed the Liberals and Family First for opposing the changes.

They also called on Labor to do more to get rid of the Australian Building and Construction Commission.

The Government had promised to abolish the commission and replace it with a

new industry inspectorate, with watered-down power, from February 1, 2010.

A spokeswoman for Workplace Relations Minister Julia Gillard said the bill would "be dealt with by the Senate in the new year". The first Senate sitting date is February 2.

She blamed the Opposition for the delay and called "on the Liberal Party to respect the wishes of the Australian people" and the Government's mandate.

"The Government remains committed to delivering on its election promise to abolish the ABCC," she said.

But its proposal has met stiff resistance from the Opposition and Family First senator Steve Fielding. He has

proposed five amendments that would largely keep the commission's powers.

Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union national construction secretary Dave Noonan said unions did not like the Government's bill. But passing it was preferable to keeping the Howard government's laws.

"We've got a situation where workers are put under threat of prosecution for conducting legitimate union business," he said.

Mr Noonan cited the case of South Australian building worker Ark Tribe, who may be jailed for not attending an interview with the commission. He said Senator Fielding's amendments appeared to

have been drafted for him by big business and Family First should be rebadged "greedy property developers first".

Mr Noonan said unions would seek a meeting with Ms Gillard to ask how the Government would meet its election commitment.

■ Australian Nursing Federation federal secretary Ged Kearney said it was an honour to be nominated as a candidate for the ACTU presidency.

Ms Kearney said she was "excited by the fact that some of the country's smallest and biggest unions have supported my nomination". Outgoing president Sharan Burrow has signalled she is backing ACTU senior industrial officer Cath Bowtell to succeed her.