

TED O'BRIEN - SHADOW MINISTER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH AMANDA STOKER, SKY NEWS

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Amanda Stoker

So, it's great to have you with me, let's start with a gas ban in Victoria. What's your reaction to the introduction of this policy?

Ted O'Brien

I think it's one bizarre decision after another in Victoria at the moment, Amanda. I think the decision of the Andrews Labor government to ban gas connections in new properties is an own goal, it really is. You got to say why are you doing it? The reason they will give is it will reduce emissions, but here is the problem, in fact if you move from gas in Victoria, to leverage the grid, so go to electricity. Well, emissions are going to be higher by a multiple of over five, so they can't claim they are trying to stop gas and electrify houses to save the planet. As it stands today, it's going to be five times worse by going from gas in the house in Victoria, to pulling off the grid. So maybe they're doing it for economics but hang on Canberra, ACT did a similar thing. The price of gas went up 3.2% for households, 3.5% for businesses. This is only going to restrict choice and it will restrict supply, both things lead to one outcome, higher prices. So right now, as people are on their knees paying higher prices, a Labor government decides they're going to kill gas in the households and make them pay even more. Doesn't make sense. It's bizarre.

Amanda Stoker

It really is bizarre. How do we help people on the Labor side of politics understand the importance of gas as a transitional fuel to make sure that we keep reliability and stability in the system even as we transition over the long term to net zero?

Ted O'Brien

Amanda it's like talking to a drunk. Seriously, how do you convince the Labor Party about common sense in this area? Seriously? I don't know, but if you find out please let me know then we'll both know. People have been trying for a long time, not just the Coalition, by the way. You have energy experts across the country. You have people who understand engineering, understand economics, understand physics, saying it does not work like this. Every single time Labor has a pushback, their arrogance sees them doubling down and what happens you open up your power bill at home and your prices have gone up. They are taking us down a very dangerous pathway here and Australians are paying the price.

Amanda Stoker

And that price indicator is really telling us, I think that the speed with which we are headed towards net zero is not really in keeping with the needs of Australians and indeed the needs of a stable network. Do we need to have a national conversation about the speed with which we should head in this direction?

Ted O'Brien

Amanda, I think the key problem here is the speed at which Labor is taking us down its pathway. So, whenever Labor talks about net zero or decarbonisation, they talk as if there's only one way to decarbonise the economy. It has to be 82% renewables by 2030 and by the way, you're going to have a \$275 reduction in power bills as we get there. It's a lie. People are finding out it's lie, that is not the only way to decarbonise a country. The thing that Labor refuses to do is look around the world, look at economies that are actually going strongly while decarbonising. They're the ones from whom we should learn. We should not be learning from Chris Bowen and other ideologues who have now proven they've been exposed for lying, a \$275 reduction household power bills was their promise. We go back to Parliament tomorrow, since we broke for recess, winter recess to today. Average households are opening power bills, their prices have gone up over 30% in many cases over 30% and this is just the start.

Amanda Stoker

And look, you're quite right to observe it 31% is what most people are looking at in the three months to June. What's driving those higher prices and what can Australians expect to see in the next three months?

Ted O'Brien

Unfortunately, it's only going to get worse from here, Amanda and this is the news that came out only last week. You mentioned there that wholesale prices jumped by 31% in the June quarter. So today your household, whoever's listening to this your house, or your prices have gone up to probably 30% or more today, what we heard from the June quarter, you're not even feeling that yet. That is an early warning sign of what's going to flow through to your bill, next year. So, this is the thing of the more Labor restricts supply in the market, prices go up. Price is a function of supply and demand. If you restrict supply, demand continues, prices go up, Labor refuses to understand economics and they will never square this circle.

Amanda Stoker

I don't think they understand it at all. When we start factoring in the cost of massive public investment in transmission lines, in order to try and make all of this solar and wind work better in the grid. It's hard to see costs doing anything but climb, what's the better approach that the Coalition would take here?

Ted O'Brien

I think the answer for that comes in phases Amanda, in the short to medium term, what we need is a greater balance, a mix of technologies in the grid. Now the principal technology that Labor is trying to kill is gas and coal. So, we should not be closing coal fired power stations prematurely when there is no replacement. Secondly, we should be pouring more gas into the domestic market. Then you look at the medium to long term and that's where we are now seriously considering next generation zero emissions nuclear technology. I mentioned before Amanda about looking across the world, let's look at Canada. I mention Canada because they announced only a couple of weeks ago that the first site for their small modular reactors, which I visited earlier this year, won't just have one small modular reactor, they're going to put on another three units, so four in total. If you look at Canada, even today, they have between 50 - 60% of their grid is nuclear. Households in Canada, they pay around half the price that Australian's households pay, so think about that. The people of Canada, their household bills are about half the price of Australia's, why? Well, they've got between 50 and 60% of their mix coming from zero emissions nuclear technology. There are countries from whom we

can learn, this government is refusing to and right now in the Coalition we're doing all the heavy lifting to make sure we get this policy right.

Amanda Stoker

Well, thank you for doing that, Ted O'Brien I know that Australians everywhere are grateful for that as blackout Bowen sticks his head in the sand. All the best for the parliamentary week to come, thank you for your time.