

## Kelly defends energy policy comments

Updated: 9:52 pm, Thursday, 13 July 2017

Deputy PM Barnaby Joyce has rejected a Liberal MP's claims that renewable energy policy will cause deaths.

Liberal MP Craig Kelly has defended his comments that rising power prices would lead to deaths.

Both Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce and Environment and Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg have rejected Mr Kelly's claims that the Coalition's energy policy will cause deaths. The Liberal backbencher, who is the chair of the Coalition's climate committee, again told SKY NEWS Australians were struggling to heat their homes.

'The point I am making is that if we continue to subsidise any form of technology to produce energy, which at the moment is renewables, to the tune of billions of dollars that simply makes electricity prices higher,' he said. 'It means pensioners in the country cannot afford to heat their house in winter and we know from the World Health Organisation studies that if you do that you will increase the rate of winter mortalities.'

Mr Kelly originally made these claims on SKY NEWS on Wednesday and came under fire by Coalition members, with Mr Joyce rebuffing his comments. 'Our first focus has got to be making sure that people can afford power, now I suppose that's one of the issues that Craig was discussing,' Mr Joyce said. 'Whether I agree with the idea that it's responsible for the deaths of people, no I don't.'

When asked by Sky News political reporter David Speers whether or not he agreed with Mr Kelly's assessment of the Coalition's energy policies, Minister Frydenberg was more direct. 'Renewable energy is not causing the death of Australians, we know the Renewable Energy Target does add \$63 a year to the average household power bill,' Mr Frydenberg said. 'Where I do agree with Craig Kelly is we need to do everything we can to put downward pressure on prices where the Commonwealth can act, particularly around the restriction of gas exports and limiting the ability of the networks and the distribution companies to game the system.'

Mr Joyce said the Coalition was focused on delivering affordable power for consumers.

Labor's energy spokesman Mark Butler said Malcolm Turnbull needs to sack Mr Kelly as the chair of the Coalition's climate committee. 'The latest by Mr Kelly frankly makes his position as the chair of that policy committee utterly untenable' he said.

'It sends a message that instead of taking a sober, evidence based approach to energy policy at a critical time at the national debate, and the Coalition instead intends to continue its four-year crusade against renewable energy.' 'If Malcolm Turnbull is going to retain any credibility he needs to act and he needs to sack Mr Kelly as the chair of the Coalition's energy policy committee.' 'This is another appalling intervention,' he said.

Mr Butler conceded households and businesses are facing high power and gas bills, but he put that down to 'policy paralysis' at the national level.

Mr Kelly's comments come ahead of a meeting of state and federal energy ministers in Brisbane on Friday to discuss recommendations for change from Chief Scientist, Professor Alan Finkel.