

## Shorten says government has questions to answer on car carbon tax

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Bill Shorten says the Coalition has questions to answer about why the idea of a new carbon tax on cars was floated by a Turnbull government department if they were never serious about implementing it.

Coalition MPs have universally dismissed reports the government was considering such a tax this morning, with Environment Minister Josh Frydenberg saying there was about as much chance of the Turnbull government introducing a new carbon tax on cars as there was of Elvis Presley making a comeback.

The Department of Transport and Infrastructure has modelled new hard line carbon-emission rules, which industry sources say could push up the price of a new car by as much as \$5000.

Mr Shorten said the government was “all at sea” in tackling climate change. “Strangely, you have the government putting out a discussion paper proposing a carbon tax on motor vehicles,” he said. “I don’t know where that is coming from. For the government to say they have no plans, they have to answer the question why did they put the idea up if they were never serious about doing it? “What I say today is that Labor has no plans and will not have a carbon tax on motor vehicles and we offer Mr Turnbull our cooperation to get on and tackle climate change.”

Mr Shorten said the government should establish vehicle emissions standards to reduce pollution. “We will work with Mr Turnbull,” he said. “We say to Mr Turnbull get on and do something. “They have had this paper and these reports for three years. Why won’t Mr Turnbull just do something about climate change instead of talking about it?”

Mr Shorten said vehicle emissions standards were not the same as the “carbon tax” the government was reportedly considering. “Eighty per cent of the world has mandatory emissions standards on motor vehicles,” he said. “Australia hasn’t moved in three years to do anything.”

### MPs dismiss carbon tax reports

Coalition MPs have universally dismissed reports that the government is considering a new carbon tax on cars. Education Minister Simon Birmingham said the government would not be applying any carbon tax on vehicles.

“The story’s a complete beat-up and we’ve been very clear in making it certain for everybody that this is not something the government would entertain,” he told Sky News. “We do want to make sure though that we drive fuel efficiency in vehicles ... and so these types of processes, the departmental processes are not unusual things, but we can

absolutely rule out any type of carbon tax type measure on cars and vehicles. “The Labor Party should do the same. “What we will work on doing is anything in consultation with industry that can ensure Australia’s vehicle fleet is efficient, and efficient in a way that reduces costs for consumers by driving down household petrol bills.”

Conservative Tasmanian senator Eric Abetz welcomed Mr Frydenberg and Senator Birmingham’s comments. “The suggestion that the department put out had all the hallmarks of a mini carbon tax which is something that is anathema to the Australian people, so I’m very pleased that the two cabinet ministers have come out so strongly to put that issue back into the cupboard where it belongs,” Senator Abetz told Sky News.

Justice Minister Michael Keenan said the government could not have been more categorical in ruling out a carbon tax on cars. “There is absolutely nothing that the government would do within this area that would raise the prices of vehicles, and I don’t think that we could be more categorical than we have been this morning, saying that this is not something that the government would ever entertain,” Mr Keenan told Sky News.

Mr Frydenberg said the government had “no plans” to introduce a carbon tax on the family car. “This story is a beat-up,” he told ABC radio. “It’s about as likely as Elvis coming back. “What we are focused on is how to reduce the fuel costs for families with vehicles and that is something that we’ll continue to consult on, but there’s been no government decisions in this regard.” Mr Frydenberg said there had been consultation going back as far as October 2015 on fuel efficiency standards, but that the government had made no decisions on the issue. “There was a paper that went out late last year with a number of different options, including options that would see a substantial reduction in the fuel costs of more than \$500 a year for families,” Mr Frydenberg told ABC TV.

“Now, in the United States, in the UK, Canada, the EU, they all have fuel efficiency standards for their vehicles. “In fact, 80 per cent of the world’s light passenger vehicle fleet has these standards.

“The government is interested to hear from industry. “People are getting ahead of themselves here saying the government has made a final policy decision. We haven’t.”

Peak motoring body the Australian Automobile Association has condemned the idea, which would regulate fuel efficiency for vehicles in terms of tailpipe carbon dioxide emissions. Chief executive Michael Bradley said the mechanism was designed to reward makers of clean cars and penalise makers of dirty cars. “It’s a very complicated system which uses a trade weighted average and gives you an average emission for your entire vehicle fleet,” Mr Bradley told ABC radio. “Different vehicle manufacturers will have different views on this, but across the board it is our view that the targets being proposed are too stringent. “They’re not reflective of the cars that are currently driven in Australia, and the costs associated with it would be far too high.”

Mr Bradley said the scheme would be one of the most extreme in the world if introduced, and see the price of cars skyrocket. “Even the makers of the Toyota Prius would be penalised under the government’s proposed emissions scheme rules,” he said. “What our concern is, is that a policy that drives such a dramatic price rise will have the perverse

outcome of stopping people driving new cars or buying new cars. "It will lock people into older, dirtier cars and it'll have the perverse effect of keeping older, dirtier cars on the road longer. "We would encourage the government to go back to the drawing board and reflect upon where the Australian vehicle fleet is at the moment, the speed with which it can transition. "We think it can be done in a manner which allows the government to meet its targets and we think it can be done in a manner which doesn't put such a cost burden on Australian families and businesses."

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