

Victoria suggests federal government should legislate on emissions while NEG talks continue

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Victoria has again shifted the goal posts in the battle over the National Energy Guarantee, by suggesting parliament should pass the federal government's emissions reduction legislation ahead of the states signing onto the NEG.

This would delay any finalisation of the NEG for months.

The latest development comes as both former prime minister Tony Abbott and former deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce again flagged they may cross the floor on the emissions legislation.

Read more: [*Politics podcast: Barnaby Joyce at his provocative best*](#)

Wednesday's Victorian position followed the state Labor government on Tuesday making its approval of the NEG conditional on a set of demands, including that any raising of the emissions target in subsequent years could be done by regulation rather than requiring legislation.

Read more: [*Victoria says it won't sign up to the NEG without concessions*](#)

Federal Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg flatly ruled this out on Wednesday. "We're certainly not going down the path of regulation. These are targets that should be in legislation to provide the investment certainty," he said.

Victoria suggests federal government should legislate on emissions while NEG talks continue

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Frydenberg said the states were not being asked to sign on to the Commonwealth emissions target.

“It is the Commonwealth government that is the signatory to the Paris Convention. It’s the Commonwealth government that sets the national energy emission reduction targets.

“These are not issues that are within the remit of the state governments.

“What is within the remit of the state governments is the design of the guarantee, as the Energy Security Board has put forward”, Frydenberg said.

The Council of Australian Governments’ energy council considers the NEG mechanism on Friday, and the Coalition party room will have before it the federal emissions legislation on Tuesday.

Victorian Energy minister Lily D'Ambrosio [told](#) the ABC she had suggested the longer timetable “during the course of recent weeks”. Frydenberg, also [speaking](#) on the ABC, denied that.

D'Ambrosio said there was “absolutely no requirement or imperative for the states to sign up to the NEG before they [the federal government] present their federal legislation to the party room and ultimately negotiate its progress through the federal parliament”.

It was important this legislation be passed first because otherwise the states would be “simply signing onto something with a blindfold on”.

“We don’t know what the legislation will look like once it goes through the party room and goes through the federal parliament,” she said.

Victoria suggests federal government should legislate on emissions while NEG talks continue

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Tony Abbott continued his condemnation of the NEG plan, saying it was “all about reducing emissions”, when the first priority should be getting prices down.

Asked on Sky about whether he would be willing to cross the floor on the emissions legislation – the only part of the plan to be legislated federally - Abbott admitted it would be a very big step for a former leader and former prime minister to take.

But crossing the floor would not be a “mortal sin” in the Liberal party, and he pointed out that Malcolm Turnbull, as a former opposition leader had crossed the floor on an energy policy issue.

Joyce, [speaking](#) on The Conversation’s politics podcast, said if the plan “comes back from COAG and it’s absolutely untenable in regards to what happens to power prices and it forces even more misery onto people that can no longer afford power then I think you’re almost duty bound to leave that option [crossing the floor] up your sleeve.”

Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

Authors: Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Read more <http://theconversation.com/victoria-suggests-federal-government-should-legislate-on-emissions-while-neg-talks-continue-101280>