



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**BILLS**

**Environment Protection (Sea Dumping)  
Amendment (Using New Technologies  
to Fight Climate Change) Bill 2023**

**Second Reading**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 2 August 2023**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<b>Date</b> Wednesday, 2 August 2023	<b>Source</b> House
<b>Page</b> 39	<b>Proof</b> Yes
<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Responder</b>
<b>Speaker</b> O'Brien, Ted MP	<b>Question No.</b>

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**Mr TED O'BRIEN** (Fairfax) (12:28): The coalition welcomes the introduction of this bill, the Environment Protection (Sea Dumping) Amendment (Using New Technologies to Fight Climate Change) Bill 2023. This legislation is aimed at giving expression to two sets of amendments that were made several years ago to the London protocol. In our view, these are each well-intentioned changes, and we stand with the government in supporting the passage of them through the parliament. If the bill is passed, it is likely to provide Australia with improved flexibility and opportunity in relation to the import and export of carbon dioxide streams and the rapidly emerging field of marine geoengineering.

In turn, these changes would be likely to enhance Australia's capacity, and indeed the capacity of other nations, to reduce carbon emissions.

To put this bill in a broader context: along with the London convention, the London protocol is an international treaty that is aimed at protecting the world's marine environments from the dumping of wastes and other hazardous materials. Australia was a relatively early signatory to both instruments. We signed up to the London convention with effect from 1985—10 years after it came into force internationally—and we became party to the London protocol in the same year as it came into force globally, and that was in 2006. Generally speaking, both instruments have worked effectively for us and for the dozens of other countries that are signatories. However, it steadily became apparent that there was a need to modernise the protocol in order to reflect a range of environmental issues and considerations in relation to the use of various emerging technologies, such as carbon capture and storage, known as CCS; carbon capture utilisation and storage, known as CCUS; and marine geoengineering.

This led to agreement on the development of two separate amendments to the protocol, one in 2009 and one in 2013. The 2009 amendment permits the international transfer of carbon dioxide streams between countries for the purpose of placing CCS or CCUS materials into sub-seabed geological formations. The 2013 amendment, meanwhile, allows for certain wastes and matter to be deposited into a marine area in order to facilitate scientific research through marine geoengineering activities, such as ocean fertilisation.

Around the world, parties to the convention and/or the protocol have taken a considerable amount of time to assess their response to these amendments. It should be stressed that the length of time it has taken is not a reflection of widespread or deeply entrenched resistance to such changes; instead, it has been because countries have wanted to consider the many potential implications and effects of them. Australia has adopted this sometimes painstaking approach too, and it is sensible that both coalition and Labor governments have taken time and care in endorsing and preparing for such changes. There are many important issues at play here, including—as many environmental groups have pointed out—the need for vigilant management and regulation of activities related to CCS, CCUS and, in particular, marine geoengineering.

In turn, work continues to be needed on assessing how Australia can practically extract the best value from each of these forms of endeavour. In all those respects the coalition is very appreciative of the work that has been undertaken, in particular by the members of three parliamentary committees over the years: the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Climate Change and Energy and the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee. Inquiries undertaken by each of these committees have elicited valuable information and evidence about the worth and potential environmental impacts and risks of CCS, CCUS and marine geoengineering.

Importantly, they each concluded on balance and taking into account the overwhelming majority of the evidence that had been presented to them that the 2009 and 2013 London protocol amendments have the potential to deliver a myriad of benefits to Australia and to other nations. Significantly, those benefits include the very real possibility of substantially lowering carbon emissions. That point has been expressed by expert witnesses on a frequent and repetitive basis.

We also endorse the general points included in the various recent committee inquiry reports about the need for careful monitoring, management and regulation of the kinds of activities that are subject of the bill, especially if and when they increase in frequency in relation to Australia. We do hope that the Albanese government will discharge its many responsibilities in this area sensibly and vigilantly. In the meantime, we thank them for bringing this bill to parliament, and we are happy to commend the bill to the House.