

Cheers as Australia's carbon tax hits parliament

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Cheers erupted in Australia's Parliament House after Prime Minister Julia Gillard presented her bill for a new pollution tax she hopes will help counter climate change.

The deeply divisive levy will mean the nation's biggest producers of [carbon emissions](#) will be forced to pay to pollute from July 1, 2012 -- initially at a fixed price before moving to a market-based trading scheme.

"It's time to deliver the action on climate change we need," Gillard on Tuesday told the House of Representatives.

"To act on climate change. To cut [carbon pollution](#)."

Australia, one of the world's worst per capita [polluters](#) and a major exporter of coal, has long grappled with how to combat [climate change](#) and previous bills to introduce [emissions trading](#) schemes have been defeated.

Gillard has the numbers to get her Clean Energy Bill 2011 through parliament, but it is bitterly opposed by the conservative opposition which argues it will be ineffective, impact on jobs and increase the cost of living.

Thousands have protested at rallies nationwide against the levy, accusing Gillard of lying when she said ahead of her narrow August 2010 election

win there would be no [carbon tax](#) under a government she led.

Gillard acknowledged there had been years of heated debate but said most Australians now agreed carbon pollution was changing the climate and harming the environment and economy in the process.

"Today we move from words to deeds. This parliament is going to get this done," she said.

The government hopes the tax will help lower emissions by 80 percent of 2000 levels by 2050, thereby helping slow global warming and save natural treasures such as the [Great Barrier Reef](#).

The bill, due to be voted on on October 12, provides for a fixed carbon price for three years, starting at Aus\$23 (US\$23.8) per tonne of carbon pollution, before moving to a cap and trade emissions scheme in 2015.

The government has pledged to use much of the money raised to provide tax cuts, increase family payments and invest in clean energy.

Gillard, who was cheered by the public gallery after making her statement, urged lawmakers to accept the carbon price.

"The final test is this: are you on the right side of history?" she asked.

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