



Time ticking on emissions scheme: Wong

By James Massola

The Federal Government will try to push its revised emissions trading scheme through Parliament in the winter session, according to Climate Change Minister Penny Wong.

And in a swipe at Opposition Leader Malcolm Turnbull, Senator Wong said the Liberal Leader was “running out of excuses” for opposing the scheme.

On Monday, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Senator Wong announced major changes to Labor’s scheme, designed to appease the concerns of environmental, business and industry groups.

Although the introduction of the scheme has been delayed, Senator Wong said passing legislation to establish the scheme ahead of the climate change summit in Copenhagen – where international targets that will influence Australia’s final target for carbon pollution reduction will be set – was crucial.

She said the Government had made significant concessions to the Opposition over the scheme and now it was time for the Opposition to revise its position.

“[Mr Turnbull] called for more assistance to industry, the Government’s package provides for this; he called for higher targets, the Government’s package provides for this; he called for a delay, the Government’s package does phase in the scheme,” she said.

“We have to be clear with the Australian business community and the investment community and we also have to be clear with the international community, that if we turn up to Copenhagen and put targets on the table, that they have credibility, that Australia is prepared to meet them. We need the carbon pollution reduction scheme for that.”

Many business and environment groups, including the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Australian Conservation Foundation, have welcomed the revised scheme.

But federal Labor is facing an uphill battle to pass the revised legislation in the Senate.

Speaking at the launch of a Senate committee report into emissions trading, Liberal



IMPATIENT:
 Penny Wong says passing the legislation before the Copenhagen summit is crucial.

senator Mathias Cormann slammed the Government’s revised scheme.

“We want the Government to produce some proper modelling, in particular some proper modelling on the impact on jobs, so we can make some informed decisions about a future emissions trading scheme,” he said.

“We need the Government to stop focusing on politics and start focusing on sound public policy. I don’t think the Government’s changes... are sufficient in protecting jobs.”

Senator Cormann denied the Government had made the changes to its proposed legislation demanded by the Opposition, but he stopped short of outlining the Opposition’s alternative policy.

The Senate report, issued by four Opposition senators and rejected by Labor, made 18 recommendations on how the Government could change its approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The recommendations included halting the current scheme, removing restrictions on uranium mining and exporting, allowing Australia to pollute more to reduce global emissions and funding research into second-generation biofuels.

Opposition frontbencher Andrew Robb described the Government’s emissions trading scheme as “bungled” on Wednesday and said the Coalition would not pass the legislation.

The Government needs the support of the Opposition in the Senate, or the Greens and Independent Nick Xenophon and Steve Fielding to pass its legislation.