



WA Libs eye carbon trade delay

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The Government White Paper released last month confirmed the scheme would begin in 18 months with a 2020 greenhouse reduction target of between 5 and 15 per cent, depending on the outcome of global climate treaty talks this year.

But WA Liberal senator Mathias Cormann, who chairs the Senate's fuel and energy committee, said the Government should not commit to the July 1, 2010 start date regardless of the consequences.

"For the Rudd Government to impose additional economic pain through an ETS for no environmental gain would be just completely irresponsible," Senator Cormann said.

"Therefore, we should not be setting any emissions target until we know what the rest of the world is doing. It is more important to get the design of any emissions trading scheme right than to chase an arbitrary political deadline."

WA Liberal MP Dennis Jensen, a

well known climate change sceptic, said while the scheme was more sensible than earlier proposals, it remained flawed and should be delayed.

"It's pointless getting involved in something like this unless all major emitters are on board," he said.

He said the economic downturn was further reason to delay its adoption. After backing a starting date of no earlier than 2011, Liberal leaders changed tack after the White Paper.

"The coalition will assess the scheme, the targets and the start date with an open mind, but our final position will be heavily influenced by whether or not the Government's White Paper forces Australian jobs and emissions offshore," emissions trading spokesman Andrew Robb said.

The Opposition has put its policy on hold until Centre for International Economics executive director David Pearce completes a coalition-commis-

sioned review of the Government's proposals by the end of February.

The head of a lobby group which represents the heavy industries most affected by the scheme argues the introduction date of the ETS is less important than how it works.

"What needs to happen is to get the design right. When it comes into place is really a second or third order issue," Australian Industry Greenhouse Network chief Michael Hitchens said.

WA Liberal MPs are pushing for the Rudd Government's emissions trading scheme to be delayed until big polluting nations commit to cutting greenhouse gases and the economy improves.

While the Federal Opposition's official line is to keep an open mind on the ETS design and starting date until an independent review is completed next month, some Liberal MPs are opposed to aspects of the scheme and its proposed timetable.