

NZ news Energy

Government and Labour slammed for fuel tax pledges



Katy Jones | Nelson Mail

September 2, 2026 - 4:00am

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There are better ways to help people struggling with the cost of living than fossil fuel subsidies, Green Party says.
Photo: Alden Williams / The Press

Nelson's Green Party candidate says commitments not to raise fuel tax represent "the politics of fear".

The pledges would "bleed infrastructure funds dry", and leave the country "beholden" to the fossil fuel industry, Rohan O'Neill Stevens said.

The National-led coalition Government on Monday scrapped the fuel excise increase planned for January, a week after Finance Minister Nicola Willis outlined that was the National Party's intention.

The Labour Party said it wouldn't raise the tax at all in the next Parliamentary term.

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O'Neill Stevens made the comments at a question and answer session with Nelson political candidates at the city's Electrify Nelson Expo on Saturday.

Labour candidate Nelson MP Rachel Boyack said increasing the price of petrol for the lowest paid workers, who couldn't afford to switch to an electric vehicle was "a really difficult proposition" during a cost-of-living crisis.

"We do need to think about that solo mum, working a part time job, who's trying to put fuel in the car every week and what a fuel increase would do to her."



Political candidates at the Electrify Nelson Expo discussed energy policies at a panel hosted by communications consultant, Johnny O'Donnell, left. Next to O'Donnell, National Party candidate Blair Cameron, Labour candidate Nelson MP Rachel Boyack, Green Party candidate Rohan O'Neill Stevens, The Opportunity Party candidate Jodie Kuntzsch and ACT Party candidate, Chris Baillie.

Photo: Katy Jones

National candidate Blair Cameron said increases in the price of petrol and diesel - brought about by a war started by Donald Trump - had left many families struggling.

"We don't want to put extra pressure on families."

O'Neill Stevens said there were better ways to support families struggling with high costs than fossil fuel subsidies.

"We can be putting money directly in those people's pockets.

"It's the politics of fear to say that actually we're going to continue to be beholden to an industry that is slowly killing us."

The fuel tax, which is used to upgrade and maintain roads and public and active transport networks, was last raised in 2020.



Over 830 attended the Electrify Nelson Expo in Stoke on Saturday, an event presented by

Cameron said his biggest priority for transport in the region was the Hope Bypass, which would reduce congestion and unlock economic growth.

Boyack said the Hope Bypass was now "on the backburner", and immediate investment was needed to ease congestion in the area.

Labour would cap weekly transport fares for people travelling by bus in the Nelson region to \$10, she said.

Opportunity Party candidate Jodie Kuntzsch said public transport should be free.

Over 830 people attended the Electrify Nelson expo, with 47% planning to install or get quotes for solar power within six months, organisers said.

ACT's Chris Baillie said subsidies for people to switch to solar weren't necessary, with changes to the Resource Management Act due to make the process easier.

Cameron said National's offer of low-interest, long-term loans repaid through rates for homeowners wanting to switch, represented value for money, with a \$7m investment.

Boyack said more money needed to be spent on renewable energy to boost resilience and equity. Labour would help renters by offering subsidies for plug in solar for low and middle income earners, and support community batteries, in a \$160m policy paid for by repurposing the government's Gas Security of Supply fund.

Kuntzsch said the country's abundant renewable energy had to be harnessed so energy generation capacity could be tripled by 2050, using the \$500m annual ringfenced dividend revenue from the Government's ownership stake in the gentailers.

O'Neill Stevens said urgent action was needed to replace a "broken" energy system with one that built renewable generation.