

The Heated Carbon Debate is intensifying

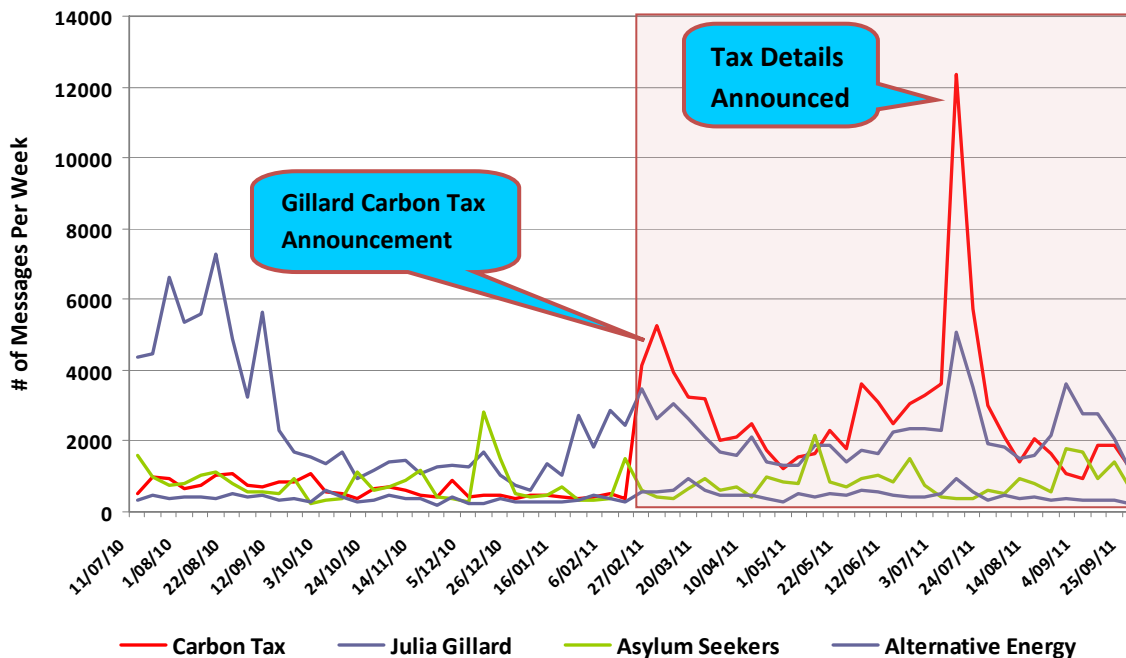
by Brad Buzzard, Senior NMIncite Analyst – Sydney

The carbon tax dialogue has been heating up lately in Australia with tensions flaring, polling numbers falling, anti tax ad campaigns ... and people are talking. With social media participation rates at an all-time-high, many Australians are turning to discussion boards, forums and chat rooms to voice their opinions on topical matters and listen to what others have to say.

A quick review of social media buzz around what is becoming a highly contentious issue exposes some interesting insights that can provide an important lesson to any Australian marketer.

Discussion Levels Staggering

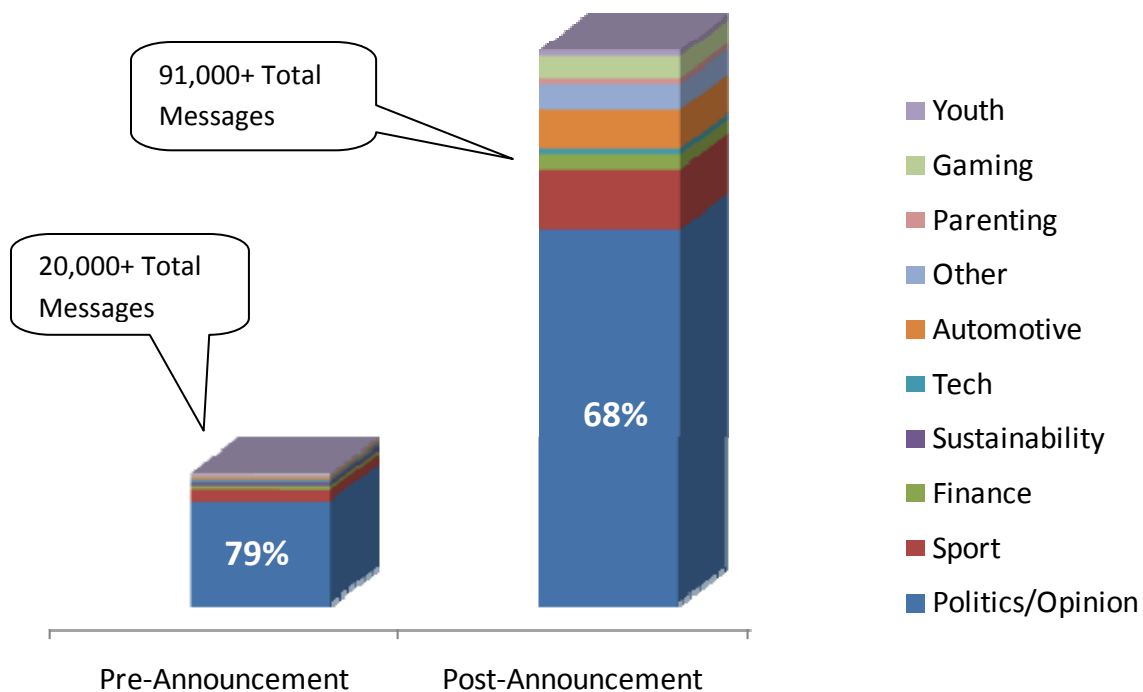
Before Julia Gillard's [February 24 announcement of an imminent carbon tax](#) for Australia, compared to what was to follow, online discussion levels about a potential carbon tax were relatively low and stable. In the 32 weeks since the February announcement, online discussion on boards, blogs and groups has grown as much as five times the levels of previous weeks. In total, there have been over 90,000 posts conversations mentioning the Carbon Tax since the Prime Minister's first announcement on February 24. Other political topics such as Asylum Seekers (27,000+ posts), Alternative Energy (15,000+ posts), and Julia Gillard (71,000+ posts) which would include Carbon tax related comments.



Source: NM Incite collection of Boards, Groups, Blogs, Blog Comments between 11/7/2010 and 01/10/2011

The Field of Discussion Participants has Changed

If the buzz volume hasn't piqued your interest yet, the buzz dispersion might. Before the February announcement, 79 percent of discussion appeared on politically focused boards and groups. After the announcement, the concentration of carbon tax discussion on politically focused sites decreased by 14 percent and began to take place on a much broader array of blogs, through sites dedicated to sports, gaming, and cars started gaining a share of the conversation.



**Source: NM Incite collection of top 25 sites Boards, Groups, Blogs, Blog Comments for Pre-Announcement posts (11/7/2010-19/2/2011) and Post-Announcement posts (20/2/2011-01/10/2011)*

How does this relate to my business?

Although the carbon tax debate may have no direct correlation with your organisation or industry, the scenario is broadly applicable to all organizations. Social media doesn't operate within set boundaries. Consumers are increasingly going about their lives in a digital environment. They use blogs, social networks and other social media to evaluate products, make purchasing decisions, share opinions and connect with friends. Traffic to social networks is skyrocketing and more and more consumers rely on word of mouth and peer recommendations when evaluating a product or making a purchase decision.

A seemingly niche dialogue can easily shift audiences. While your brand discussion may exist across certain communities today, the dialogue could shift dramatically with any new events whether the



hiring of a new CEO, the introduction of a new product, or the recall of certain brand. Listening to key communities is essential, it's also important to monitor the other communities. You could be missing an opportunity to defend your brand or engage with your key audiences.

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About NM Incite

NM Incite, a Nielsen McKinsey Company, leverages the strengths of two world-class brands: Nielsen, the most-innovative researchers, and McKinsey, the most-trusted strategic advisors to help businesses realize a sustainable competitive advantage through high-quality insights, metrics and advice. NM Incite's expert social media analysts and strategic consultants work side-by-side with clients integrating industry and functional expertise to develop innovative social media strategies and solutions that make a measurable business impact. NM Incite currently operates in 25 global markets with headquarters in New York. For more information, please visit www.nmincitate.com or Twitter: @nmincitate

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