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First Reading

~~Hon. JP BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney General and Minister for Justice) (4.29 pm): I move—~~

~~That the bill be now read a first time.~~

~~Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.~~

~~Motion agreed to.~~

~~Bill read a first time.~~

Referral to the Health and Community Services Committee

~~Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Watts): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Health and Community Services Committee.~~

Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

~~Hon. JP BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney General and Minister for Justice) (4.30 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—~~

~~That under the provisions of standing order 136 the Health and Community Services Committee report to the House on the Child Protection Reform Amendment Bill by 13 May 2014.~~

~~Question put—That the motion be agreed to.~~

~~Motion agreed to.~~

ELECTRICITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**Introduction**

Hon. MF McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (4.30 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Electricity Act 1994, the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 and the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 for particular purposes. I table the bill and explanatory notes. I nominate the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014.

Tabled paper: Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, explanatory notes.

I am pleased to introduce the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. This bill is another action of the Newman government putting downward pressure on electricity prices and water prices. This bill will reduce the impact of Labor's Solar Bonus Scheme on Queenslanders' electricity bills. Two weeks ago I announced that with the cessation of the transitional 8c Solar Bonus Scheme we would mandate an Ergon funded feed-in tariff for regional and rural Queenslanders who did not have access to fair offers from retailers, as occurs in South-East Queensland. Not only are we giving certainty to regional and rural Queenslanders; we are saving Queenslanders about \$110 million over the next six years. This bill will also deliver more effective governance arrangements for our role in the national energy market. It ensures the cost of national energy market regulation is structured around those who benefit most from a well-regulated national market. The bill also cuts red tape and duplication in reinforcing this government's treatment of CSG water as a resource—not a waste. This involves removing regulatory duplication in the management of CSG water.

I want to take the opportunity to elaborate further on the key elements of this bill. Firstly, let me talk about Labor's Solar Bonus Scheme. The bill includes important changes for how the Solar Bonus Scheme will work for regional and rural Queenslanders. The bill amends the arrangements legislated in the Electricity Act 1994 to ensure that regional and rural Queenslanders will continue to receive a payment for their exported solar energy after 30 June this year. The current transitional 8c Solar Bonus Scheme ceases, as set out in the Electricity Act, on 30 June 2014. The amendments establish a new requirement for Ergon to replace the current regulated 8c Solar Bonus Scheme. We are doing this so that regional and rural Queenslanders who were on the 8c Solar Bonus Scheme will continue to receive a fair sum for the electricity they export to the grid. The bill also requires that this will be paid by Ergon Retail, recognising that Ergon Retail benefits from on-selling the exported electricity.

The Queensland Competition Authority will be responsible for setting the regulated regional feed-in tariff, which is considered appropriate given the QCA's role in determining the notified prices.

The changes proposed by this bill mean the cost of 50,000 existing 8c Solar Bonus Scheme connections in Queensland and the cost of new solar customers will be no longer flowing through to electricity bills. This saves Queenslanders about \$110 million over the next six years. The amendments are a vast improvement on the 44c scheme introduced by the former government where costs are paid by electricity distributors and then passed on to all Queensland consumers via higher electricity prices. Labor's scheme will add \$67 to your household bill this year, rising to \$276 in 2015-16 and will ultimately cost Queenslanders \$3.3 billion by 2028.

I want to make it very clear, however, that the new mandated feed-in tariff will not apply in the Energex network area, reducing red tape for Energex and retailers in the south-east corner. Customers in the Energex network can currently access market driven feed-in tariffs of between 4c to 10c offered voluntarily by competing electricity retailers. I must also make it absolutely clear that these changes will have no impact on customers receiving the 44c feed-in tariff. Importantly, the new arrangements meet the commitments that this government made to review the Solar Bonus Scheme once the QCA had determined a fair value for exported solar energy. Given the rapid and changing pace in the way we generate and use electricity, there is also a commitment to review the requirement for Ergon to make these payments within five years of commencement. Ultimately, the amendments deliver a fairer solar scheme for Queensland's future, certainty for regional and rural Queenslanders without access to competition and without any added costs for other electricity consumers.

The bill also amends the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 to repeal the provisions treating CSG water as recycled water where it may enter the drinking water supply. These CSG water amendments reflect the outcomes of the QCA's review into the regulation of the CSG industry, which recommended that part 9A of chapter 3 of the water supply act be repealed and that the release of CSG water be managed solely under the Environmental Protection Act 1994. The QCA review considered that the protection of public health cannot be compromised but that the water supply act imposes specific and prescriptive requirements on CSG water that do not apply to water from other sources of similar quality, such as mine discharges, and which are not commensurate with the risk.

The amendments to the water supply act also align with the CSG water management policy approved in 2012 by my colleague the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection which makes it clear that CSG water should be used and managed in a way that is of benefit to the community and reduces impacts on the environment. Despite the proposed changes, there are no implications for the quality of drinking water. If CSG water is to be used directly for drinking water, then it will continue to be regulated through the drinking water quality management provisions of the water supply act which ensure the protection of public health. The bill contains a transitional provision that will ensure that existing CSG recycled water management plans or exclusion decisions stay in force until relevant environmental authorities or specific beneficial use approvals are amended to ensure that they contain conditions to protect public health. The transitional provision will expire on 1 July 2015, by which time the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection will have amended all appropriate approvals.

This bill also makes amendments that will allow Queensland to recover from industry its share of the costs of funding the Australian Energy Market Commission, which is a key governance body for the national energy markets. This will be achieved via minor amendments to the Electricity Act 1994 and the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004, providing for an increase in fees charged to electricity and natural gas transmission companies that are subject to the national energy rules. Industry cost recovery means the cost of regulation is borne by those who benefit from a well-regulated industry. The AEMC is the rule maker for the national energy markets and provides strategic advice on market development issues. The AEMC's work supports efficient, reliable and secure energy market frameworks which ultimately serves the long-term interests of consumers. This brings Queenslanders in line with other states and territories that already recover the costs of national regulation from industry.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the contribution of the QCA in reviewing and providing advice on the regulatory frameworks for the solar feed-in tariff and management of CSG water, as well as participation by key stakeholder groups in those very important review processes. As a package, the measures set out in the bill will improve the efficiency of our energy and water industries and put downward pressure on prices. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. MF McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (4.38 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Watts): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee.

Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

Hon. MF McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (4.39 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That under the provision of standing order 136 the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee report to the House on the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill by 13 May 2014.


Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

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~~FORESTRY AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL~~

~~Introduction~~

 **Hon. SL DICKSON** (Buderim—LNP) (Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing) (4.39): I present a bill for an act to amend the Forestry Act 1959 and the Recreation Areas Management Act 2006 for particular purposes and to make minor and consequential amendments to the act mentioned in schedule 1. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Health and Community Services Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Forestry and Another Act Amendment Bill 2014.

Tabled paper: Forestry and Another Act Amendment Bill 2014, explanatory notes.

I am pleased to introduce the Forestry and Another Act Amendment Bill 2014. This bill will amend the Forestry Act 1959 to facilitate the remaking of the Forestry Regulation 1998 which is due to expire in August this year. The bill also amends the Recreation Areas Management Act 2006 to insert provisions relating to the renewal of commercial activity permits to ensure consistency across other relevant legislation administered by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

Like some of the forests it used to administer, the Forestry Act is quite old. While it continues to serve its purpose well in providing the necessary legislative framework for managing Queensland's forest lands, the act has been reviewed in the process of preparing to remake the Forestry Regulation and there are several areas that require amendment to bring it up to date. This bill will transfer a number of specific provisions from the Forestry Regulation into the Forestry Act to achieve consistency with modern drafting practice and to meet the fundamental legislative principles set out in the Legislative Standards Act 1992.

Offences and the penalties associated with committing a number of offences under the Forestry Act will also be standardised with more contemporary legislation and will streamline the administration and management of forest lands. This will assist the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, as both departments have responsibilities under the Forestry Act. The general community will also benefit, as it will remove confusion caused when the law in relation to carrying out a particular activity is unnecessarily different across lands such as national parks and state forests.

The first category of amendments relates to transferring officer powers from the Forestry Regulation into the Forestry Act. Currently, the Forestry Act provides for the appointment of forest officers and plantation officers. Forest officers are generally Public Service employees, such as Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service rangers, with responsibility for the management of state forest lands. Plantation officers are employees of HQ Plantations, the company licenced to manage plantation timber within specific state plantation forests. Forest officers and plantation officers can exercise powers specified in the forestry legislation. The majority of powers granted to forest officers