



Speech by

**JEFF SEENEY**

**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

---

Hansard 20 October 1998

**WATER STORAGE, IRVINEBANK; ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY**

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (6.33 p.m.): The Government's bid to amend the motion before the House is so hypocritical that it would be nothing short of laughable if the matter were not so serious. The Government is seeking to claim the credit for the coalition's planning to cover up the fact that it was totally incapable of any planning itself. All that it has achieved is to underscore that lack of planning. Labor members were in office for six long years and they did nothing.

We are told that the Government's strategy to keep the lights on now revolves around 400 megawatts from the two new power stations that are to come on line at Townsville in the new year. It revolves around the 300 megawatts to come on line at Oakey in the year 2000 and the 840 megawatts at Callide C currently scheduled to come on line in two 240-megawatt units in middle and late 2001. Everybody in this House knows that those were all coalition projects. Everybody in Queensland knows that every last one was a coalition project. Once again, the facts spoil the rhetoric. The Townsville projects were the result of tenders called by the coalition in March 1996. The Oakey project was the result of the coalition calling tenders in 1997 and the Callide C project was signed off by CS Energy and Shell Coal before the coalition left office in July, and wasn't it just as well!

There is absolutely no mystery as to why Government members want to pinch our projects. It is because they do not have any of their own—not a single one. For over six years earlier in this decade when in office, they did absolutely nothing to secure the future power supplies of this State. At the end of the previous Government's term, despite desperate calls for action from the QEC, the only addition to the State's power grid occurred when some private investors built a 37 megawatt gas-fired power station at Barcaldine. If that had not happened, the record of the Government would have shown that not one solitary megawatt of power that was planned by the ALP was actually delivered in its entire tenure. That is a disgraceful abrogation of a Government's responsibility. Is it any wonder that the current Minister does not want to talk about who is to blame?

In 1991, in its submission to the Tully/Millstream task force, the Labor Government was told clearly and unequivocally by the then Queensland Electricity Commission that if it did not proceed with Tully/Millstream and build more coal, gas or distillate fuelled plant by 1997, the lights would probably go out. However, what did the Government do? For the next four years, it did nothing! It left it until it was too late to do anything at all about the crunch in 1997. By the time the then Government took some decisions in 1995, the options were pretty light—recommissioning decommissioned plant at Callide A and running an extension cord over the border. Under the coalition Government, the State had turned itself into the most efficient generator of non-hydropower in this country. However, throughout the later part of the 1980s, Queensland was reduced to running an extension cord over the border because members opposite had ignored planning requirements for so long. There simply was not another option open to try to keep the lights on and now we find ourselves in such a corner. Government members know that we are in such a corner and the Minister knows that we are in such a corner, which is why he is so keen to get his apologies in first.

The excuses keep coming. The Minister says that the problem is maintenance, yet he knows that the problem is capacity. Everybody with half a brain knows that the problem is capacity. The industry keeps telling Queensland that the problem is capacity. There is simply insufficient generating capacity in this State today to reliably meet summer peak demand because, in the early 1990s, the

Labor Government and the current Minister failed to take any decisions that would have ensured that we had sufficient capacity in the late 1990s. I know it must hurt, but the fact is that if Queensland can get through the next couple of months without a major disaster resulting from that lack of planning, the projects that are coming on line that will start to give the people of Queensland some breathing space are the two power stations in Townsville, for which tenders were called by the coalition in March 1996, and the projects at Oakey and Callide.

It really is hypocritical for members opposite to claim credit for Callide C, which is in my electorate, given that they have desperately tried to kill it off. We found that out at the Estimates committee hearing when the Minister tried desperately hard not to recall certain facts. He said that he could not recall putting the cleaners through those contracts, not once but twice.

Time expired.

---