



Speech by

Mr N. ROBERTS

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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WATER STORAGE, IRVINEBANK; ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (6.30 p.m.): Currently the Government is doing everything in its power to ensure that the lights stay on in Queensland. First and foremost, it is being honest with the people of Queensland about the potential shortages. A Summer Readiness Project Team has been established to ensure that the State's electricity system is in the best possible position to meet expected record demand during this summer period and to inform the public so as to ensure their cooperation in periods where reserves are tight.

Four working groups have been established and are currently investigating and implementing initiatives in the areas of generating capacity, system security and market operations, Government initiatives and public relations. Those project groups are reporting to a steering committee consisting of senior industry and Government officials. To date the specific outcomes from those working groups include: the coordination of work to ensure that the Tarong unit currently out of service is back on line by November of this year; the rescheduling of major power generation unit overhauls to ensure that all of Queensland's capacity is available for the month of November, which is when the supply and demand situation is expected to be at its tightest; the initiation of processes to minimise Government power usage during emergency situations; and the implementation of a new operational strategy for Wivenhoe to allow it to better meet the high peak demands in the south-east Queensland region. Work is also being undertaken by the two Queensland electricity retailers, Ergon and Energex, to implement demand side management initiatives and seek interruptible supply agreements with some of the State's major power users. Finally, an energy efficiency campaign was put in place to provide the public with information about conserving energy over the period of tight supply.

I stress that the energy efficiency campaign is not simply a knee-jerk reaction to the current situation, but will provide the public with information that will deliver energy efficiency savings to all homes and businesses throughout Queensland, as well as reduce demand on the State's electricity system. To date the experience is that, with public cooperation, it does lead to a significant reduction in demand. Many of these initiatives are designed to ensure that the lights stay on in Queensland over the period up to the end of November. However, processes designed and implemented over recent months will be maintained to ensure that Queensland's electricity system continues to operate in an efficient and effective manner.

The summer readiness initiatives are already delivering greater flexibility and will deliver increased capacity as well as help to reduce demand on the electricity system. By the end of November, the commissioning of the strengthened Calvale-Tarong transmission line will reinforce the existing high voltage transmission line between central and southern Queensland. This will increase reliability and allow for a further 220 megawatts of electricity to be transferred to south-east Queensland. The lack of that line currently is a significant barrier to the efficient distribution of the available supply of electricity. In January 1999, the commissioning of two peak load power stations in Townsville and a gas turbine at Swanbank near Brisbane will add a further 478 megawatts of capacity to the system, increasing the State's reserves to 29%. A 75 megawatt gas power station to be commissioned in February by Boral will add even more reserve capacity to the system.

In short, the Government has a plan now to deal with the current constraints in the electricity industry. In 1995, it also had a plan to cater for electricity needs into the future, which included Eastlink

and processes to ensure the construction of peak load and base load stations up to the year 2006. The Government has planned for the future needs of Queensland's electricity supply. Those plans were scuttled by the coalition during two years of inactivity and indecisiveness in that industry.
