



Speech by

Mr N. ROBERTS

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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AUSTA ELECTRIC; NATIONAL COMPETITION POLICY

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (10.28 a.m.): The Labor Party has a clearly defined policy to reconstitute AUSTA by reamalgamating the separate generation corporations created under the previous coalition Government. From its public statements to date, it appears that the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission, ACCC, will be a potential obstacle to that proposal. If the ACCC stands in the way of that initiative, it will be acting against Queensland's and the national interest in terms of Australia's participation in the fast-growing international market for electric power. In order to compete effectively in this market, power generators will need a sound financial and asset base and the financial clout to compete with large multinationals.

The Queensland power industry has enjoyed a reputation worldwide for technical excellence and is ranked highly against world's best practice standards. That reputation needs to be consolidated and used to the best advantage of the industry and Queenslanders.

The fracturing of AUSTA into four small corporations has undermined significantly its ability to take advantage of the growing international opportunities in power generation and distribution. In South-East Asia alone electricity demand is expected to grow by 66,000 megawatts over the next 10 years, and much of that growth is beyond the capacity of the Government sectors in the affected countries.

This is a major export opportunity that we cannot ignore. Any moves by the ACCC to oppose the reconstitution of AUSTA will be anti-Queensland and against the national interest. I call on the ACCC to back off and leave the future of the Queensland electricity industry to Queenslanders.
